

THE INFLUENCE OF WALT WHITMAN
ON SHERWOOD ANDERSON
AND CARL SANDBURG

by

Viva Elizabeth Haught

DUKE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
DURHAM, N. C.



Rec'd 1936

Author

Donor

DUKE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

MANUSCRIPT THESES

This volume may be consulted freely, but the literary rights of the author must be respected. No passage may be copied or closely paraphrased without the previous written consent of the author. If the reader obtains assistance from this volume he must give credit in his own work.

This thesis by Viva Elizabeth Haught has been used by the following persons, whose signatures attest their acceptance of the above restrictions.

[A library borrowing this thesis for use by one of its patrons should secure the signature of the user.]

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Date</u>
Ray L. White	NC State University Raleigh, N. C.	4-20-67
Philip A. Greasley	Michigan State U.	18 Nov. '74
R. L. White	Ill. St. U.	2 June 1975
William A. Smith	Ball State University	June 20, 1972

Duke University Library

The use of this thesis is subject to the usual restrictions that govern the use of manuscript material. Reproduction or quotation of the text is permitted only upon written authorization from the author of the thesis and from the academic department by which it was accepted. Proper acknowledgment must be given in all printed references or quotations.

FORM 412 5M 6-41

1936-36
R.M.

THE INFLUENCE OF WALT WHITMAN
ON SHERWOOD ANDERSON
AND CARL SANDBURG

The writer of this thesis wishes to
by
take this opportunity to acknowledge her
indebtedness to Viva Elizabeth Haught, B. Habbell
and Clarence Gohdes, whose excellent ad-
vice and suggestions made possible the
completion of the material contained
herein. To Doctors Frank Clyde Brown
and Brady Hixson Jordan I wish to express
my gratitude for their kind consid-
eration and criticism.

V. E. B.

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts
in the Graduate School
of Arts and Sciences
of
Duke University

1936

257312

1936-36
A.M.?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I. The Influence of Walt Whitman on Later American Poets	page 2
I. "I, Walt Whitman"	2
II. The Poets	3
A. Introduction	3
B. Religion	12
C. Sex	12
D. Verse Technique	19
E. Conclusion	20
Chapter II. <u>Acknowledgment</u>	22
The writer of this thesis wishes to take this opportunity to acknowledge her indebtedness to Doctors Jay B. Hubbell and Clarence Gohdes, whose excellent advice and suggestions made possible the compilation of the material contained herein. To Doctors Frank Clyde Brown and Brady Rimbey Jordan I wish to express my gratefulness for their kind consideration and criticism.	22
Chapter III. V. E. H. of Whitman	23
III. A Comparison of the Writings of Whitman and Whitman	24
A. Democracy	27
B. Religion	104
C. Sex	132
D. Verse Technique	132
IV. Conclusion	136
Appendix A	142
Bibliography	143

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page
Chapter I. The Influence of Walt Whitman on Later American Poets	2
I. "I, Walt Whitman".	2
II. The Torch	5
A. Democracy	6
B. Religion	13
C. Sex	16
D. Verse Technique	19
E. Conclusion	20
Chapter II. Walt Whitman and Sherwood Anderson . . .	22
I. American Criticism of Anderson	22
II. Anderson's Opinion of Whitman	37
III. A Comparison of the Writings of Anderson and Whitman	41
A. Democracy	41
B. Religion	57
C. Sex	64
D. Verse Technique	73
IV. Conclusion	78
Chapter III. Walt Whitman and Carl Sandburg	83
I. American Criticism of Sandburg	83
II. Sandburg's Opinion of Whitman	93
III. A Comparison of the Writings of Sandburg and Whitman	96
A. Democracy	97
B. Religion	104
C. Sex	123
D. Verse Technique	129
IV. Conclusion	136
Appendix A	142
Bibliography	143

Copyright 1927

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
54 EAST LAUREL AVENUE
CHICAGO, ILL.

**The Influence of Walt Whitman
on Sherwood Anderson and Carl Sandburg**

The purpose of this study is to show the influence of Walt Whitman on Sherwood Anderson and Carl Sandburg. The study is based on a close examination of the poetry of these two writers and a comparison of their work with that of Whitman. The study shows that both Anderson and Sandburg were deeply influenced by Whitman's poetry, and that this influence is evident in their own work. The study also shows that the influence of Whitman on these two writers was not limited to their poetry, but also extended to their prose writing. The study concludes that the influence of Whitman on Anderson and Sandburg was a major factor in the development of their literary careers.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
54 EAST LAUREL AVENUE
CHICAGO, ILL.

Chapter I

The Influence of Walt Whitman on Later American Poets

I

"I, Walt Whitman"

"The proof of a poet is that his country absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorbed it."¹ So announced Walt Whitman to the "puritan" America of 1855 in his Preface to Leaves of Grass, and just so has he become one of the most far-reaching and stimulating poets of the so-called modern period. His finger-tips have pressed lightly or heavily, as the case might be, upon the hands of many "makers of Poems" who have

¹Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass (Inclusive Edition edited by Emory Holloway), New York, 1931, p.507. This volume is cited hereafter as Whitman, Leaves.

followed him. Many have been his acknowledged disciples; few have escaped him.

It is in this Preface to the 1855 edition of his single volume of verse that one finds the theories of this great poet and his self-assumed mission. He shall sing the glory of the United States, the equality of men and women, the cosmos, the individual, and the American language. In "Song of the Answerer" which also summarizes his theories, he declared that

The maker of poems settles
justice, reality, immortality,
His insight and power encircle
things and the human race,
He is the glory and extract thus
far of things and of the
human race.²

Whitman longed

Not for an embroiderer,
(There will always be plenty of
embroiderers, I welcome them
also,)
But for the fibre of things and
for inherent men and women.³

²Whitman, Leaves, p.142.

³Ibid., p.201. The excerpt is from "Myself and Mine."

He declared defiantly that the beauty of a poem does not lie in its rhyme, or decoration, or conventionalism of form, but in its expression of "all events and passions and scenes and persons some more and some less to bear on your [the reader's] individual character as you hear or read."⁴ He carries this thought further in the "Song of the Answerer":

The words of the true poems
 give you more than poems,
 They give you to form for
 yourself poems, religions,
 politics, war, peace, be-
 havior, histories, essays,
 daily life, and every-
 thing else,
 They balance ranks, colors,
 races, creeds, and the
 sexes,
 They do not seek beauty, they
 are sought,
 Forever touching them or close
 upon them follows beauty,
 longing, fain, love-sick.⁵

He believed, too, in the physical as well as the spiritual manifestations of life; he sought to comprehend life as a whole, not discarding the things that, to others, had seemed commonplace and tawdry. The cosmos and the common were synonymous to him; he averred that he was an integral part of the most elemental things. The ordinary man to him was "the

⁴Whitman, Leaves, p.495.

⁵Ibid., p.143.

divine average"; he exhorted the laborer to be proud of himself, for divine and eternal elements existed in him also. He was even capable of softening his "barbaric yawp" to express a religious lyrical rapture over a blade of grass.⁶

Whitman desired above all else to sing of life as it actually is, not as it idealistically might be. To him, the function of the poet was "to indicate the path between reality and their [men and women] souls."⁷ He writes:

I swear to you the architects shall
appear without fail,
I swear to you they will understand
you and justify you,
The greatest among them shall be he
who best knows you, and encloses
all and is faithful to all,
He and the rest shall not forget you,
they shall perceive that you are
not an iota less than they,
You shall be fully glorified in them.⁸

Just how closely his literary descendants have followed his doctrine remains to be determined.

II

The Torch

This section has been subdivided under five headings--

⁶Whitman, Leaves, p.28, from "Song of Myself."

⁷Ibid., p.493.

⁸Ibid., p.191, from "A Song of the Rolling Earth."

democracy, religion, sex, verse technique, conclusion--so that in each part a particular aspect of Whitman's influence upon certain American poets who followed him may be treated. Each division is considered as a separate unit in order to avoid confusion and to assure clarity.

A. Democracy

John Burroughs, friend and biographer of Whitman averred that

the reader who would get at the spirit and meaning of "Leaves of Grass" must remember that its animating principle, from first to last, is Democracy,--that it is a work conceived and carried forward in the spirit of the genius of humanity that is not in full career in the New World,--and that all things characteristically American (trades, tools, occupations, productions, characters, scenes) therefore have their places in it. It is intended to be a complete mirror of the times in which the life of the poet fell, and to show one master personality accepting, absorbing all and rising superior to it,--namely, the poet himself. Yet is it never Whitman that speaks so much as it is Democracy that speaks through him. He personifies the spirit of universal brotherhood, and in this character launches forth his "omnivorous words." What would seem colossal egotism, shameless confessions, or unworthy affiliations with low, rude persons, what would seem confounding good and bad, virtue and vice, etc., in Whitman the man, the citizen, but serves to illustrate the boundless compassion and saving power of

Whitman as the spokesman of ideal Democracy.⁹

To elucidate further Whitman's conception of democracy, let us examine an article by Henry Alonzo Myers, who expressed the belief that Whitman has been grossly misinterpreted. This critic declared that "Whitman remains, abroad and at home, the poet of political democracy and social freedom, the advocate of certain strange personal modes of behavior, in spite of the fact that a sober analysis of Leaves of Grass proves that the Whitman of 1855, convinced that he had a large mission to fulfill, brought to world literature a new and profound interpretation of life in terms of an inner, spiritual democracy."¹⁰ He considered Whitman as the interpreter of this "inner, spiritual democracy" rather than an outer, materialistic one, as the majority of critics believed him to be. Mr. Myers wrote that "the importance of the inner world to Whitman is apparent in the fact that he has gone beyond the middle of the 1855 preface before he turns aside to discuss, as a secondary topic, political liberty and equality. It is made further apparent when we note the contrast between the just equality of men proclaimed as an eternal law in his poetry and the political inequality discovered by his sober

⁹ John Burroughs, Whitman: a Study, New York, 1901, pp.80-81.

¹⁰ Henry Alonzo Myers, "Whitman's Conception of the Spiritual Democracy, 1855-1856," in American Literature, vi (1934), 239.

and critical analysis of the American experiment in Democratic Vistas.¹¹ This critic declared finally that Whitman's "affirmation of all things grasped as manifestations of eternal justice" was the poet's medium for an interpretation of life in terms of this inner, spiritual democracy.¹²

Obviously, Whitman's scope could not be rivalled by later poets; yet each of them has played his part in presenting some particular phase of democracy. Although Joaquin Miller did pose and exaggerate, as Louis Untermeyer accused,¹³ his poem, "Columbus," has been called by Fred Lewis Pattee the greatest single poem of the period. In it, all the lustiness of splendid manhood is manifest as in Whitman's Leaves of Grass. Pattee deemed Miller a great humanitarian whose "voice was heard wherever there was oppression or national wrong."¹⁴

But it was Edwin Markham who really voiced "the good gray poet's" sentiments. An indirect quotation from the New York Times indicates that his poem "The Man with the Hoe" was the first definite crystallization of Whitman's message in

¹¹Myers, "Whitman's Conception," p.243.

¹²Ibid., p.251.

¹³See Louis Untermeyer, Modern American Poetry: a Critical Anthology, New York [1925], p.9 (Third revised edition).

¹⁴Fred Lewis Pattee, A History of American Literature since 1870, New York, 1915, p.110.

our poetry.¹⁵

In "Gloucester Moors" and "The Brute" by William Vaughn Moody was revealed a passion for human and industrial justice. The first poem celebrated leisure, self-control, and enjoyment of nature as the rights of the laborers; the second celebrated the steam-shovel.¹⁶ To digress somewhat, one might well compare his idea of evolution, "the aspiring impulse within all life which makes it rise not through struggle against outer forces so much as through the innate impulse to develop"¹⁷ with Whitman's treatment of it in "Song of Myself."¹⁸ In Moody's "An Ode in Time of Hesitation," in which he bitterly resented America's war policy toward other nations, is found an interesting reference to Whitman as "the strong spirit."¹⁹

And how very unusual to find that the apparently cold and remote Edwin Arlington Robinson possessed, according to one critic, such a great love for men that he spent half of every year in New York City so that he might mingle with the

¹⁵See William L. Stidger, Edwin Markham, New York [1933], p.128.

¹⁶See Norman Foerster, American Poetry and Prose: a Book of Readings, 1607-1916, New York [1925], pp.916-918.

¹⁷Percy H. Boynton, A History of American Literature, New York [1919], p.459.

¹⁸Whitman, Leaves, pp.68-69.

¹⁹William Vaughn Moody, Poems, Boston and New York, 1902, p.18.

large crowds, just as Whitman mingled with them during his Bohemian days.²⁰

Clement Wood, on the other hand, found in this poet "nothing of the cosmic sweep of Whitman, no ecstatic vista of the human comedy or tragedy, depending on which side of the cloud you observe, much less anything of the vaster tragic-comedy of which 'the drifting mote called man' is so small a part."²¹ Perhaps, however, it might not be too dangerous to hint a likeness of character delineation--or rather lack of it--in Whitman and Robinson. Neither writer gave any "physical embodiment" to his characters and neither has any "local color" or background. Both wrote of the "spirit of man"; they differed in that Robinson's style, like his people, was "dominantly intellectual," while Whitman's manner was emotional.²²

We find, however, that none of Whitman's disciples and interpreters could do more than reiterate weakly what he had said far more powerfully. Only James Oppenheim, whose origins may be found in Whitman and whose poetry protested against the stolidity and indifference of the common man and railed against the world because of its duplicities yet lived it just the same, thoroughly imbedded Whitman's visions in his own

²⁰ Nancy Evans, "Edwin Arlington Robinson," in The Bookman, lxxv (1932), 675.

²¹ Clement Wood, Poets of America, New York [1925], p.122.

²² For a further discussion of this subject, see Percy H. Boynton's article, "American Authors of To-day," in The English Journal, xi (1922), 383-391.

poetry.²³

But it was Carl Sandburg about whom Whitman might have written: "The greatest among them [the architects or poets] shall be he who best knows you, and encloses all and is faithful to all."²⁴ We discover that "both Whitman and Sandburg looked about them and wrote. They wrote of common men, laboring men, little men as well as big men, of mud and smoke and steel; they wrote of towns in which they lived, towns where there was filth, towns that were filled with elbowing humanity; they wrote of the country where farmers and woodsmen lived, where there were growing crops and rolling prairies and mighty trees. They wrote of life as they found it, not of life as they dreamed it. They used no veneer. They were true to 'the here and now.'"²⁵

Other critics felt that Sandburg came directly out of the tradition left by Whitman but that he seemed to be closer to the common people than was his predecessor.²⁶ Although he realized the wretched aspect of social injustice, Sandburg,

²³Louis Untermeyer, The New Era in American Poetry, New York, 1919, pp.42-56.

²⁴Whitman, Leaves, p.191.

²⁵Esther Lolita Holcomb, "Whitman and Sandburg," in The English Journal, xvii (1928), 550.

²⁶See Horace Gregory's article, "Our Writers and the Democratic Myth," in The Bookman, lxxv (1932), 377-382 and John Macy's article, "The New Age of American Poetry," in Current History, xxxv (1932), 555-556.

like Whitman, was buoyed up by supreme confidence in the future:

I speak of new cities and new people.
I tell you the past is a bucket of ashes.
I tell you yesterday is a wind gone
down, a sun dropped in the west.
I tell you there is nothing in the
world only an ocean of to-morrow,
a sky of to-morrows.²⁷

Yet Sandburg's attitude toward democracy seemed to differ from Whitman's in that he claimed material opportunities rather than spiritual.²⁸

The Vagabondia Books composed by Richard Hovey and Bliss Carman carried the Whitmanic note, with the influence of "Song of the Open Road" apparent in the opening lines of Hovey's poem, "Spring":

I said in my heart, "I am sick of four
walls and a ceiling.
I have need of the sky,
I have business with the grass.
I will up and get me away where the
hawk is wheeling,
Lone and high,
And the slow clouds go by."²⁹

²⁷ Carl Sandburg, Cornhuskers, New York, 1918, p.11.

²⁸ See the article by Edgar Lee Masters, "The Poetry Revival of 1914," in The American Mercury, xxvi (1932), 279.

²⁹ Foerster, American Literature, p.902.

John Hall Wheelock's volume, The Human Fantasy, concluded with an acclamation to all living and inanimate things.³⁰

True it is, then, that

Leaves of Grass, historically, prophetically and as a work of art, is of major significance. It is not that Whitman in some 14,000 lines, some of them amazingly beautiful poetry, some of them dull prose, announces a definite independence from Europe and the emergence of the American race, visioned by him but yet to be; nor is it that he broke the Puritan hush over sex at a time when it was personally dangerous to do so; nor that he added a form to poetry; it is that he surprises the secret of the American soul in such a way as to give an American the experience of that secret.³¹

B. Religion

But it was not this wider aspect of democracy which alone concerned Whitman, for the very heart of Leaves of Grass is religion; a tiny blade of grass is sufficient to dismay an atheist. There is, indeed, a deep as well as surface resemblance of these chants to the Scriptures of Isaiah or Job, for it was Whitman's purpose to present a personal account

³⁰ See James Cappon, Bliss Carman, New York and Montreal [1930], pp.60-61; Untermeyer, The New Era, p.230. See Appendix A, p.142, for letter from Wheelock to the writer of this thesis.

³¹ John Macy, American Writers on American Literature, New York [1931], p.260-261. This excerpt is from the chapter entitled "Whitman" by James Oppenheim.

of his moral and religious conception of life.³² Whitman believed that poetry would increasingly do the work of religion and that the succeeding test of poetry would be its religious character. The "Song of Myself" is a complete expression of his belief in the perfect unity of matter and spirit with all the spiritual significance it involves. With these views in mind let us trace their development along the high-marks of later American poetry.

Though at first glance apparently little similarity is seen between Joaquin Miller and Walt Whitman, a closer observation discovers a likeness in spirit and in thought. We find the former concerned with the fundamentals of human life, imitating the naturalism and mysticism of Whitman as closely as his flamboyant temperament would permit.³³

Some years later appears Bliss Carman with a mystical tendency overshadowed by transcendentalism. Like Whitman, he too attempted to discover a practical means of expression for his emotions; "the great question for him was to find a supreme expression for this transcendental form of vision, an embodiment of it significant enough perhaps to stand as a new poetic interpretation of life."³⁴

³²Havelock Ellis, The New Spirit, New York [1926], p.109.

³³See Pattee, A History of American Literature since 1870, p.110.

³⁴Cappon, Bliss Carman, p.36.

Another, who, like Carman, was not an admirer of Whitman's form and not an experimenter in free verse, but who did have the "cosmic imagination" was Moody. The editor of Some Letters of William Vaughn Moody marks the latter's

intimate sense of personal presence, the generous nature that has expressed this religion of humanity with incomparable power in Raphael's hymn to man in Act III of the "Masque of Judgment." Deeply spiritual, and as far as possible removed from the sensualism the thoughtless have found in it, is his paganism, as there set forth, his belief in the feelings, the passions, and the senses. He conceives them all as ministers of spirituality, and sees them transfigured in that ministration. He believes that through them alone is spirituality realized, or realizable.³⁵

Obviously, here is another accused of inappropriate dealing with sex. Like Whitman again, "Moody saw in evil not exactly the implacable foe of good, but rather its twin brother, bone of its bone and flesh of its flesh, since both good and evil are children of passion and will."³⁶ Focus this explanation upon "Song of Myself," "Children of Adam," "A Song of Joys" and notice the perfect alignment of subject matter.

And so the pageant continued with Frost's quiet acceptance of God's presence, with Lindsay's almost savage interest

³⁵ Daniel Gregory Mason, Some Letters of William Vaughn Moody, New York, 1913, p.xxvii.

³⁶ Charlton M. Lewis, "William Vaughn Moody," in The Yale Review, 11 (1913), 691.

in external phases of religion, with Sandburg's "barbaric yawp" against "bunkshooters" and his realistic "Grass," with Oppenheim's Biblical Songs for the New Age and his long symbolic poem, "The Sea," and his poems on Whitman and Lincoln, and with Wheelock's The Human Fantasy and The Belover Adventure, both filled with spiritual intensity buoyantly singing "Splendid it is to live and glorious to die."

C. Sex

But the phase of Whitman's writing which has caused a great deal of dissension among critics is his treatment of sex. To him the soul and the body were synonymous; both were divine. "I am the poet of the Body, and I am the poet of the Soul," he acclaimed, and

One's-self I sing, a simple separate
person,
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word
En-Masse.

Of physiology from top to toe I sing,
Not physiognomy alone nor brain alone
is worthy for the Muse,
I say the Form complete is worthier
far,
The Female equally with the Male I sing.

Of Life immense in passion, pulse,
and power,
Cheerful, for freest action form'd
under the laws divine,
The Modern Man I sing.³⁷

³⁷Whitman, Leaves, p.1.

He dared to discuss love and lust, soul and body in the same breath. He used sexual imagery as a symbol for mystical, religious experiences. Vulgarly was far from his intention, for to him every part of the body was divine--"the man's body is sacred and the woman's body is sacred." He did not preach the "free-love" cult, however; indeed, that was farthest from his thought. He desired, even urged, that men and women face life in all of its inclusiveness with decent thinking, candid minds and cease corrupting themselves with indecent thoughts of passion.

Joaquin Miller, like Whitman, had no aversion to sex or to nakedness but regarded both as natural and pure. In him may be traced, as in Whitman, sincere belief in the ultimate purity of natural love and passion.

Moody attempted to employ sexual imagery in his deeply spiritual poetic dramas much as Whitman had done in "Song of Myself" and "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking."³⁸ To him the only possible attitude toward life was its vigorous acceptance. He ardently believed one should live life to its fullest extent.³⁹ His poem, "I Am the Woman," was a Whitman-like study of woman's place in society; he made her elemental, sensual, yet spiritual.

³⁸Mason, Some Letters, p.xxvii.

³⁹See ibid., p.xxviii.

Wheelock's philosophy, likewise, was that of Leaves of Grass. In The Human Fantasy he "rejoices in 'the dear, sensual Fact of things,'" speaks of "'the clear reality of life, filled with laughter and eternal strength,'" hails

The carnal buoyance and the common
sense
Of sane and sensual humanity.⁴⁰

The advent of Edgar Lee Masters with his Spoon River Anthology created a controversy as remarkable as the furor raised over Leaves of Grass. The former was, perhaps, "a reply to Leaves of Grass from the viewpoint of those Children of Adam whose engendering has been blighted and whose days gangrened by their 'democratic' environment."⁴¹ This Anthology paid more attention to passion and lust than most critics preferred. The frankness of Whitman was quite evident in these poems, which acknowledged and descanted upon hypocrisy, hate, greed, and lust in village life.⁴²

Sandburg's treatment of sex carried more suggestiveness than frankness. A comparison of Whitman's "Children of Adam" with Sandburg's "Circles of Doors" from Smoke and Steel (1921)

⁴⁰See Untermeyer, The New Era, p.216.

⁴¹John Cowper Powys, "Edgar Lee Masters," in The Bookman, lxi (1929), 654.

⁴²For a further discussion see the article by Percy H. Boynton, "The Voice of Chicago: Edgar Lee Masters and Carl Sandburg," in The English Journal, xi (1922), 610-620.

disclosed the latter's appeal to the imagination rather than to the senses. Both Masters and Sandburg desired more liberal ethical freedom. Both disapproved of "puritan" repression and desired free play for the emotions.⁴³

D. Verse Technique

Turning from subject matter to versification, we find Whitman's influence significant. He attempted to fit his verse to the thoughts which he wished to express; consequently, traditional verse forms did not suit his purpose.⁴⁴ Examination of his poetry reveals that his verse is composed in lines, not in sentences. The accumulative effect of these lines is that of a chant. It is interesting that Amy Lowell believed that Whitman wrote in his peculiar form through ignorance rather than design. She wrote that he had not the slightest idea what cadence really meant and had very little rhythmical sense. The moderns, she believed, owed very little to his form; yet they did owe to him an attitude.⁴⁵

With the "poetry revival" of 1914 came the so-called "free verse," imagism, realism, and all the other "isms" growing out of a revolt against stilted phrases and sentimentality.

⁴³Boynton, "Voice of Chicago," xi, 610-620.

⁴⁴See Cappon, Bliss Carman, pp.313 passim.

⁴⁵Amy Lowell, Poetry and Poets, New York, 1930, pp.61-87.

The Imagists carried out Whitman's plea for the exact word and the common language.⁴⁶

One of the most important products of Whitman's propagating spirit was Sandburg, who captured the "good, gray poet's" very voice in many of his poems, so that distinction between them if read aloud is often difficult. Both used comparatively unfamiliar rhythms; both employed unfamiliar words, while Sandburg used slang vociferously. The catalogues found in the latter's poem, "The Sins of Kalamazoo," may be likened to those in Whitman's Leaves of Grass. Long sentences and reiterations characterize the poetry of both writers.⁴⁷

E. Conclusion

It is evident, then, that critics agreed, as far as they go, concerning Whitman's influence on the subject matter and verse form of later American writers. Their findings indicated that Whitman's theories of democracy, religion, sex, and verse technique carried over into the productions of many writers who followed him. But the critics have been literary rather than scholarly, so that the validity of their decisions may or may not be valid or sound. Few attempts at definite

⁴⁶Boynton, "Voice of Chicago," in The English Journal, xi (1922), 610-620.

⁴⁷Paul L. Benjamin, "A Poet of the Common-Place," in The Survey, xlv (1920), 12-13.

parallelisms have been made; consequently, there still remains the task of making a critical and careful examination of twentieth century poetry and prose to determine the extent and depth of Whitman's effect upon them. In the two chapters which follow an attempt has been made to show the relation of Whitman to Sherwood Anderson and to Carl Sandburg. The parallels which have been used are presented in an endeavor to indicate possible connections of content and form between Whitman and these two writers. The facts are presented as accurately as possible, but no attempt has been made to prove the actual degree of influence, as only the apparent degree may be determined in any case.

Chapter II

Walt Whitman and Sherwood Anderson

I

American Criticisms of Anderson

Although Sherwood Anderson had already published two books, Windy McPherson's Son (1916) and Marching Men (1917), it was not until the printing of Mid-American Chants in 1918 that critics noticed him. Louis Untermeyer, writing for a current periodical, remarked that "even a casual reading of these loosely written chants reveals how frequently the author has forced his note and how much of his utterance is indebted to Whitman and the idiom of Sandburg."⁴⁸ He illustrates his point by this quotation:

⁴⁸Louis Untermeyer, "A Novelist Turned Prophet," in The Dial, lxiv (1918), 484.

Song to the Sap

In my breast the sap of spring,
 In my brain grey winter, bleak and hard,
 Through my whole being, surging strong
 and sure,
 The call of gods,
 The forward push of mystery and of life.

Men, sweaty men, who walk on frozen roads,
 Or stand and listen by the factory door,
 Look up, men!
 Stand hard!
 On winds the gods sweep down.

In denser shadows by the factory walls,
 In my old cornfields, broken where the
 cattle roam,
 The shadow of the face of God falls down.

From all of Mid-America a prayer,
 To newer, braver gods, to dawns and days,
 To truth and cleaner, braver life we come.
 Lift up a song,
 My sweaty men,
 Lift up a song.⁴⁹

Mr. Untermeyer cites, as a second example, this excerpt from
 "one of the finest rhapsodies":

I am pregnant with song. My body
 aches but do not betray me. I will
 sing songs and hide them away, I
 will tear them into bits and throw
 them in the street. The streets
 of my city are full of dark holes.
 I will hide my songs in the holes
 of the streets.

In the darkness of the night I awoke
 and the bands that bind me were
 broken. I was determined to bring

⁴⁹ Sherwood Anderson, Mid-American Chants, New York, and
 London, 1918, p.51.

old things into the land of the new.
A sacred vessel I found and ran with
it into the fields, into the long
fields where the corn rustles.

All of the people of my time were bound
with chains. They had forgotten
the long fields and the standing
corn. They had forgotten the west
winds.

Into the cities my people had gathered.
They had become dizzy with words.
Words had choked them. They could
not breathe.⁵⁰

Mr. Untermeyer, however, made no attempt to parallel these passages with any particular ones in either Whitman or Sandburg.

Another reviewer, Thomas Walsh, asserted that in these so-called chants "one finds a rather apocalyptic expression given to the untutored boast of an egotism based upon half-education and half-culture. It is honest expletive for the most part rather than singing...."⁵¹

In 1919 H. W. Boynton compared the American realism⁵²

⁵⁰Untermeyer, op. cit., p.484. The excerpt is from Anderson's Chants, p.11.

⁵¹Thomas Walsh, "Poets, Rose Fever and Other Seasonal Manifestations," in The Bookman, xlvii (1918), 641-643. Compare this criticism with that of Cappon in his Bliss Carman, pp.313 passim, in which he maintains that Whitman attempted to fit his verse to the ideas which he desired to express and in which he treats of the colossal egotism of Whitman as well.

⁵²See H. W. Boynton, "All over the Lot," in The Bookman, xlix (1919), 728-734.

of Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio with that of Edgar Lee Master's Spoon River Anthology, called by John Cowper Powys "a reply to Leaves of Grass."⁵³

Two years later Robert Morse Lovett, in a review of Poor White (1920), stated that "Mr. Anderson's formula is realism, enlarged and made significant by symbolism,"⁵⁴ a formula which might very well be applied to Whitman, who is certainly a realist and who uses sex images for symbolical purposes.

The following year Paul Rosenfield eloquently described Anderson's vocabulary as being "of the simplest folk; words of a printer, a copy-book quotidianness, form a surface as hard as that of pungent fresh-planed boards of pine and oak";⁵⁵ and it was Whitman who wrote An American Primer, in which he admonished the writer to use the simple words. The critic further says that "we know ourselves in Anderson as we know ourselves in Whitman. He is about the job of creating us, freeing us by giving us consciousness of selves."⁵⁶ Continuing, he states: "What happened to Whitman, decay for want of

⁵³John Cowper Powys, "Edgar Lee Masters," in The Bookman, lxi (1929), 654. This thought is supplemented by Percy H. Boynton's article, "Edgar Lee Masters and Carl Sandburg," in The English Journal, xi (1922), 610-620.

⁵⁴Robert Morse Lovett, "Mr. Sherwood Anderson's America," in The Dial, lxx (1921), 79.

⁵⁵Paul Rosenfield, "Sherwood Anderson," in The Dial, lxxii (1922), 29.

⁵⁶Ibid., p.38.

comprehension, was not to happen to him. He was afoot to so remain."⁵⁷

In 1923 Alyse Gregory made a criticism of Anderson applicable to Whitman: "Yet it is at the command of a voice that one finds oneself proceeding--a voice exhorting, suppliant, prophetic, simulating stridency, sentimentalizing, and dwindling or recurring moments to a bewildered whisper of inquiry."⁵⁸

Ludwig Lewisohn during the same year in a review of Many Marriages (1922) voiced the Whitman theories of democracy, sex, and nature as being a vital part of Anderson's work.⁵⁹

Later, Arthur Kellogg in an article printed in The Survey alleged that Anderson, in the main, was concerned with the common man whose "soul" is all important and whose life is directed by his environment."⁶⁰

Dealing with the same theme, Louis Bromfield, reviewing A Story Teller's Story (1924), felt that Anderson disclosed not only himself but the ideals, the emotions, and the thoughts

⁵⁷Rosenfield, "Anderson," p.41.

⁵⁸Alyse Gregory, "Sherwood Anderson," in The Dial, lxxv (1923), 243.

⁵⁹See L. L. (Ludwig Lewisohn), "Novelist and Prophet," in The Nation, cxvi (1923), 368. Compare Whitman's theory of democracy, of sex, of religion as found in Democratic Vistas and Other Papers, London and Toronto, 1888, p.1 passim.

⁶⁰Arthur Kellogg, "Telling Tales on Life," in The Survey, 1111 (1924), 288.

of his fellow-men, who belong to the working class.⁶¹ Whitman's Leaves of Grass is a manifestation of this same theory.

Joseph Collins, on the other hand, examining the same book, found no such material. To him, Anderson's so-called Freudian psychology was boresome, and the writer's habit of becoming "hypnotized by high-sounding words" displeased him. He regretted that Anderson had not read Fielding and Chekhov instead of Whitman and Clemens.⁶²

Joseph Wood Krutch, however, considered that Anderson was at his best when he used "Whitmanesque prose-poems"⁶³ though vagueness of thought marked his works.

But Stuart P. Sherman wrote in 1926 that "another of his [Anderson's] gifts is that he is tremendously American and proud of it. He is no booster or braggart, save in the purely

⁶¹Louis Bromfield, "Introspection and Retrospection," in The Bookman, lx (1924), 492. See John Burrough's Whitman, New York, 1901, pp.80-81 for a discussion of Whitman's democracy. To him, Whitman is the personification of "universal brotherhood." See also Henry Alonzo Myers's article, "Whitman's Conception of the Spiritual Democracy," in American Literature, vi (1934), 241-242.

⁶²Joseph Collins, "The Doctor Looks at Biography," in The Bookman, lxi (1925), 24. It is interesting to note that in October, 1924, Robert Morss Lovett wrote: "Mr. Anderson is of all American writers most like Chekhov, whose method it was to start from some fortuitous concurrence of characters of forces and drift with the human stream, impartially and disinterestedly, letting nature have its way, in full surrender to the current of reality. And Chekhov wrote no novels" ("Sherwood Anderson," in The English Journal, xiii (1924), 537).

⁶³See Joseph Wood Krutch's article, "Vagabonds," in The Nation, cxxi (1925), 627.

Whitmanian sense. Like Whitman, he is too profoundly conscious of all that is vile and shoddy and vicious and sodden and ugly in the American scene. But in his moments of elation he, too, feels that, with all his imperfections on his head, and with all the roily turbulence within, he is 'the typical American' of our day."⁶⁴

The year 1927 saw the publication of the three following books: A New Testament by Sherwood Anderson, The Phenomenon of Sherwood Anderson by N. Bryllion Fagin, and Sherwood Anderson by Cleveland B. Chase. The first volume will be treated in Section III of this chapter. The second publication concerned itself primarily with Anderson's rise to fame and contained critical analyses of his works. Of the poems, Fagin said: "They are the homely rhapsodic exclamations of simple people close to the objects that stimulate their senses. They constitute perhaps the closest approach to the kind of indigenous poetry that Walt Whitman dreamed of."⁶⁵ He continued:

The realist, the mystic, the prophet, even the reformer insist on being heard along with the poet. In his Mid-American Chants the poet had the best of it. He chants of "The Corn-fields," of "Industrial America," of "The Beginning of Courage," of "Manhattan," of "Spring," of "Planting," of "The Middle World," of "Stephen the Westerner," of "The Lost Ones," of

⁶⁴Stuart P. Sherman, Critical Woodcuts, New York, 1926, p.12.

⁶⁵N. Bryllion Fagin, The Phenomenon of Sherwood Anderson, Baltimore, 1927, p.143.

"Dark Nights," of "The Mating Time," of "The Soul of Chicago," reminiscent though they were of the Whitmanic stride, were full of sensuous pictures and music.⁶⁶

Chase in his study of Anderson concerned himself little with critical estimates. He remarked that Anderson's chants were "unlike his usual prose; they are not essays; they very patently echo many of Walt Whitman's thoughts; they attempt to recapture the rhythm of certain passages from the Old Testament; and they bear evidence to a lyrical urge on the author's part."⁶⁷ He later stated that Anderson's earlier writings owed much to Whitman's ideas concerning America,⁶⁸ and noted: "Anderson needs to be saved from a cheap, soft sentimentality that distorts and castrates everything he writes."⁶⁹ The same criticism may be made of Whitman whose "So Long," "O Magnet-South," and "The Centenarian's Story" are permeated with just such sentimentality.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Fagin, The Phenomenon of Sherwood Anderson, p.147.

⁶⁷ Cleveland B. Chase, Sherwood Anderson, New York, 1927, p.67. The rhythm of Whitman's poetry has been compared with that found in parts of the Old Testament; see Bliss Perry's Walt Whitman: His Life and Work, Boston and New York, 1906, pp.96 and 283 and Gay W. Allen's article, "Biblical Analogies for Walt Whitman's Prosody," in Revue Anglo-Américaine, ix (1933), 490-507.

⁶⁸ Chase, Anderson, p.83.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.80.

⁷⁰ Whitman, Leaves, pp.416-419, 393-394, 250-254.

Another critic, Percy H. Boynton, in the volume More Contemporary Americans, observed: "...to the friendly and unshocked observer he does seem to be somewhat Whitmanic in his keeping his hat on indoors or out and sounding his barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world, or raising the roof if he happens to be in the bedroom beneath the eaves."⁷¹

In a short article in The New Republic, however, Lawrence S. Morris, discussing the highlights of Anderson's career, remarked: "Intellectually he was guided by one idea: that what is natural is sweet and that it is only pretense which sours life. The world is soiling its emotions by being ashamed of them, he thought."⁷² Turning to his style in writing, Morris averred that Anderson in his later works became obsessed by words, so that he came to express "unreal emotions in unreal words" and forgot to remember the principles involved in their use.⁷³

Hamish Miles, reviewing A New Testament (1927), deplored its style, declaring that its comparison with Whitman's Leaves

⁷¹ Percy H. Boynton, More Contemporary Americans, New York, 1927, p.167.

⁷² Lawrence S. Morris, "Sherwood Anderson; Sick of Words," in The New Republic, 11 (1927), 277. See Emory Holloway's article, "Whitman as a Critic of America," in Studies in Philology, xx (1923), 345-369, which holds that Whitman believed man to be fundamentally good and averred he should cease defiling himself by impure thoughts of passion.

⁷³ Morris, "Anderson," ibid., 11, 278. It is interesting to note that Whitman called himself a "word-fellow" and imported such words as "Libertad," "Camerado," "Eleve," "Philosophus."

of Grass would leave no doubt in the reader's mind which came from "an inner flame, which only from an inner fever."⁷⁴

In 1928 T. K. Whipple, of the University of California, published his book Spokesmen: Modern Writers and American Life, in which he discussed Anderson at some length. He concluded that

since, as he [Anderson] says, he has no God, Anderson's is a nature-mysticism much like Whitman's. He advocates a return to a simpler and more primitive way of life, to the condition of savages and even of beasts and plants. In his first novel he wrote:

American men and women have not learned to be clean and noble and natural, like their forests and their wide, clean plains.

This point of view is at the root of his affection and admiration for horses and negroes; it recurs again and again in his stories, and explains his choice of title for his novel Dark Laughter. Hence comes his hatred of the intellect, as a dividing, separating force which will not let man "just be, like a horse or a dog or a bird." That is why he usually joins "dry" and "sterile" with "intellectual." As a character in The Triumph of the Egg exclaims:

What makes you want to read about life?
What makes people want to think about life?
Why don't they live? Why don't they leave
books and thoughts and schools alone?

Even one who holds that the intellect need not be an impoverishing factor in experience and that to

⁷⁴Hamish Miles, "From an Inner Fever," in The Saturday Review of Literature, iv (1927), 86. Amy Lowell has said: "To follow him [Whitman] is merely to imitate the pattern of his cloak" (Poetry and Poets, p.87).

live like the animals is neither a feasible nor a desirable solution of the human problem may still concede that it would be better to live so than not to live at all, and be grateful to Anderson for the emphasis he lays on the importance of living.⁷⁵

In the same year Régis Michaud, lecturer at the Sorbonne in 1926 and winner of the Montyon prize bestowed by the French Academy, published his lectures in book form. Concerning Whitman and Anderson he said:

Few American authors, since Whitman, have taken literature as seriously or have conceded it as being on so high a level of mysticism as Sherwood Anderson. I mention Whitman advisedly in connection with Anderson. His influence over the younger American writers is manifest. Was he not the first to emphasize the bio-chemical element, and to find lyrical inspiration in it? Dreiser's hymns to the Vital Force, his paeans to physiology, as well as his tragic sense of everyday life, bear Whitman's imprint unmistakably. Sherwood Anderson owes him still more. sensualism and mysticism blend in his prose as they do in Whitman's poems. In the words of both of them we hear simultaneously the whispers of heavenly death and the somber droning of the Erdgeist. Both of them have given heed to what Emerson called the demonic. Both have brought the soul and the body into magic and sensuous contact. The poetry of the one and the poetic prose of the other seem to come from an embrace in which the spiritual and the material still coalesce. Modern as they are in many respects, the stamp of primitivism is on them. In Anderson's novels, man, like the cosmos in "Leaves of Grass," has not yet been disengaged from that

⁷⁵ T. K. Whipple, Spokesmen: Modern Writers and American Life, New York, 1928, pp.134-135. The "first novel" referred to is Windy McPherson's Son (1916).

amorphous clay kneaded by the gods. He still finds himself in a nebulous state, half-way between himself and animal.

"Mid-American Chants" are authentic grafts budding from "Leaves of Grass."⁷⁶

In the same volume in a chapter entitled "Anderson on This Side of Freud," Michaud remarked:

After Rousseau, Walt Whitman has tried the gospel of sexual sincerity at all cost. He had attempted to call the universe to him and hold it in his naked arms. "I Walt Whitman, a cosmos!" and it all ended in failure.... But Anderson is a poet. Like Whitman he worships Life and the Vital Force. He wants us to surrender to all beautiful instincts. Society denies us this right, Life itself will build a bridge to greater freedom.⁷⁷

With the year 1929 came the opinion of a critic that Anderson's popularity was waning.⁷⁸ It seemed to her that he was entirely too concerned with himself, too lacking in interpretative imagination. This writer remarked that "one hears that he has lifted American idiom from the status of mere slang and made it 'art.' He has, it is true, given a certain Homeric quality to the idiom of the factory, the race course, and the

⁷⁶ Régis Michaud, The American Novel To-day: a Social and Psychological Study, Boston, 1928, pp.154-155.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.195.

⁷⁸ Rachel Smith, "Sherwood Anderson: Some Entirely Arbitrary Reactions," in The Sewanee Review, xxxvii (1929), 159-163.

pool room; but unfortunately, it is no longer American slang. Vigorous still and ungrammatical, but Andersonized beyond recognition."⁷⁹

After declaring that Anderson was not successful with his language, this critic condemned his mysticism, maintaining that Anderson, though writing of God, could not forget himself. She found also his verse to contain a few lines of great lyrical beauty, which, it is true, are nearly hidden by page after page of vagueness and obscurity.⁸⁰

The years from 1930 to 1933, inclusive, showed a noticeable dearth in publications dealing intensively with Anderson. In 1930 Pattee mentioned his "Whitman-like chants"⁸¹ and Parrington's The Beginnings of Critical Realism in America: 1860-1920 merely summarized Anderson's stories, but manuscript evidence indicated the critic's intention to analyze, an intention which was forestalled by the latter's death.⁸² Three years later Granville Hicks concerned himself with Anderson only so far as the latter might be matched with Theodore Dreiser and Sinclair Lewis in his treatment of American life.⁸³

⁷⁹Smith, "Sherwood Anderson," p.162. See Cappon's chapter on "The Tradition of Emerson and Whitman in American Literature," in Bliss Carman, pp.279-280, for a discussion of Whitman's style and expression.

⁸⁰Ibid., pp.162-163.

⁸¹Fred Lewis Pattee, The New American Literature: 1890-1930, New York [1930], p.337.

⁸²Vernon Louis Parrington, The Beginnings of Critical Realism in America: 1860-1920, New York [1930], pp.370-371.

⁸³Granville Hicks, The Great Tradition: an Interpretation of American Literature since the Civil War, New York [1933], pp.231-6.

In 1934 Anderson was criticized in a chapter entitled "Broken Face Gargoyles"⁸⁴ by Harry Hartwick, who saw both Dreiser and Anderson despising morality, desiring a "return to Nature," considering "the cosmos as an inherent mixture," hating "standardization in ethics and industry," placing "their faith in instinct," and confessing themselves "absolutely bewildered by life."⁸⁵ He said that "Anderson resembles Whitman gone to seed, or a bacchic St. Francis of Assisi, with his lush nonsense about a 'sweeter brotherhood,' 'virgins,' the 'soft lips' of men and women on his hands, and his spiritual orgasms."⁸⁶ He devoted a moment to Anderson's poetry, in which he accused it of "smelling powerfully of Sandburg and Whitman."⁸⁷

That many other criticisms of Sherwood Anderson have been made from 1918 to 1935 goes without saying; however, only those which link Anderson with Whitman have been included in this section. An interesting fact to note, moreover, is that the majority of critics connecting these two writers wrote over a period of four years: 1924-1927. During this time ten of the twenty-four critical analyses appeared, five being printed in 1927 alone, a phenomenon which might be explained by the rapidity

⁸⁴ Harry Hartwick, The Foreground of American Fiction, New York [1934], pp.111-150.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.111.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.113.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.120.

with which Anderson was turning out work and by the increased interest in "natural" subjects.

That the critics vary in their estimate of Anderson's literary value is to be expected, and that most of them realize his kinship with Whitman is not surprising. Untermeyer, Walsh, Rosenfeld, Collins, Krutch, Fagin, Miles, Smith, Chase, and Pattee agreed that Anderson's was a Whitmanesque style. Boynton, Lovett, Lewisohn, Sherman, Morris, and Fagin, too, discussed Anderson's realism as a counterpart of Whitman's. Comparison of their treatment of humanity was the concern of Lovett, Gregory, Lewisohn, Kellogg, Bromfield, Sherman, Whipple, Michaud, Smith, and Hartwick.

None of these critics, however, has drawn parallels between the two writers. The appraisals of each have been general; no specific comparisons have been made. That Anderson had read and had been influenced by Whitman is evident enough, but just how and where this influence occurred remains to be discovered.

Finally, if one cared to draw a graph of the appraisals of Anderson's works, one would discover the peak of admiration occurring in 1927, after which time critics generally agreed that Anderson was not the powerful writer that some had thought him to be. The new practical group of critics attacked his sentimentality and his continual reference to his "confused" state. They had no patience with him and did not hesitate to say so, so that by 1934 his rating as a literary writer was extremely low.

II

Anderson's Opinion of Whitman

Sherwood Anderson has written criticisms of Carl Sandburg, Gertrude Stein, Ring Lardner, Sinclair Lewis, and others, but only occasionally does the reader find mention of Whitman in his writings.

As a factory worker, he rebelled, according to his own statements, against the conditions of the working men and women. It was all very well for Whitman, Sandburg, and other poets to praise and make heroes of this class but industrialism had caused the degradation of "the democracy on which Whitman had counted so much."⁸⁸ Then, in parentheses, he made this remark: "I had not heard of Whitman then. My thoughts were my own."⁸⁹ Later, while working in Columbus, Ohio, he began to read extensively. It was at this time, he said, that he became acquainted with Whitman.⁹⁰

In his The Modern Writer (1925), which is a denunciation of standardization, he satirically noticed that "although by

⁸⁸ Sherwood Anderson, A Story Teller's Story, New York, 1924, pp.141-142.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p.142.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p.155. He says: "However I read greedily everything that came into my hands. Laura Jean Libbey, Walter Scott, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Henry Fielding, Shakespeare, Jules Verne, Balzac, the Bible, Stephen Crane, dime novels, Cooper, Stevenson, our own Mark Twain and Howells--and later Whitman."

the world in general Whitman is recognized as our one great American poet, I have heard of no general movement to introduce him into our public schools to take the place of the decidedly second rate and imitative New Englander, Longfellow."⁹¹

In speaking of the "Modern Movement," as he designated it, with relation to the common person, he declared that Whitman and Dreiser were the first real instigators of a better type of workman.⁹²

The following year, 1926, saw the publication of his Sherwood Anderson's Notebook, which contained only two references to Whitman: the first being a quotation,⁹³ and the second being a conclusion that, since Whitman came out of a robust age primarily interested in conquering the wilderness of the West, his theories could be of little use in this age of the factory.⁹⁴

Four years later (1930) in a review of Assorted Articles, a book written by D. H. Lawrence, Anderson referred to Whitman and used the latter's term "dry-necks" for certain types of readers. He said:

⁹¹ Sherwood Anderson, The Modern Writer, San Francisco [1925], p.10.

⁹² See ibid., p.34.

⁹³ Sherwood Anderson, Sherwood Anderson's Notebook, New York, 1926, p.90. The quotation reads: "'Come ye men of 'these States,'" as old Walt Whitman was so fond of saying, in his windier moods..."

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp.198-199.

Making people clean and nice again, as Whitman at his best did, making them again feel to you as fields and trees feel.

You'll get the same feeling from "Assorted Articles"...unless you are, alas, dry-necks, in which case all of Lawrence will be just stench to you....

As Whitman has become to the dry-necks.⁹⁵

In 1933 appeared an edition of Whitman's Leaves of Grass, selected and illustrated by Charles Cullen, which contained an introduction by Anderson. Of Whitman, he wrote:

Whitman is in the bones of America as Ralph Waldo Emerson is in the American mentality, but what is needed here now is a return to the bones and blood of life--to Whitman....⁹⁶

Whitman is the singer of the strong lustful ones, of the men who could love a woman or a field or the sky above the prairies, forest or seas. He walked far and wide, bare-throated, brown-armed, and singing... not up in the mind only but with his whole body. He was thought too crude, too lustful. They turned away from him. As a boy and young man I myself went into respectable middle-class homes and found there volumes of Whitman's "Leaves of Grass" with the so-called ugly lustful passages cut out with scissors.

How shameful! How can there be real delicacy without strength? I proclaim Whitman the most delicate

⁹⁵ Sherwood Anderson, "A Man's Mind," in The New Republic, lxi (1930), 22. The dots do not indicate omission but occur in the article as indicated in the text above.

⁹⁶ Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass (selected and illustrated by Charles Cullen), New York [1933], p.v. The material omitted is a declamation against modern industrialism.

and tender of all American singers. Here is this volume of his songs the American artist Charles Cullen having made alive glowing pictures for it, pictures full of pregnant strangeness. I hail it. Read again "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd."... "Out of the Cradle Englessly Rocking." Read the rocking long and short American verses. Who was it said only the negroes had brought real song into America? Hail, all hail, negro workmen, river hands, plantation hands, makers of songs, but hail also, always Whitman, white American, lustful one....

Singer of the great land, the broad land... singer of growing cities, horses plowing, men sowing seed, soft waves breaking on sea shores, forest singer, town and dusty country road singer.

The great sweet land that Walt Whitman sang so lustily is still here. People now forget what America is... Why forget how huge, varied, strong and flowing it is? We gather too much and stay too long in holes in cities. We forget land-love, river and sky-love. To these we must return before we begin again to get brother to brother love of which Whitman sang and dreamed.

Whitman is the bones and blood of America. He is the real American singer. What is wanted among us now is a return to Whitman, to his songs, his dreams, his consciousness of the possibilities of the land that was his land and is our land.⁹⁷

In a personal letter mailed from Nyack, New York, on October 7, 1935, to the writer of this study, Anderson states emphatically his attitude toward the influence of Walt Whitman. The letter reads:

⁹⁷ Whitman, Leaves of Grass, pp.vi-vii. The dots do not indicate omission but appear in the text.

I think that any American writer who was not influenced by Walt Whitman would be dead to the work of our most significant poet.

Sincerely
Sherwood Anderson

III

A Comparison of the Writings of Anderson and Whitman

The material for this section will be treated under four divisions: democracy, religion, sex, and verse technique. By a direct comparison of the works of Anderson and Whitman, it is hoped that the degree of influence of the latter upon the former may be determined. It is fitting, as the writer of this thesis believes, to indicate now that neither in this nor in any chapter contained herein can the actual degree be decided; only the apparent degree can be determined.

A. Democracy

Whitman's Leaves of Grass is a manifestation of democracy. The book reveals a passion for America rarely found among writers; it is replete with the spirit of absolute human equality and brotherhood--universal, as well as national. To Whitman, divinity in nature and in humanity is the keynote to the democratic spirit; the greatness of a nation cannot be

determined by its material prosperity.⁹⁸ He finds his ideal among the masses and he glories in a common heritage. Self-reliance must be the motto of every person. Just how these ideas concern Anderson is the problem to be solved, if possible, here./

Anderson continually rails against the pathetic conditions of the working class, against industrialism, and above all against standardization. Yet he feels that all this will pass and the workman will come into his own again as Whitman himself dreamed. He perceives dire consequences if the American people persist in their monetary ambitions and neglect the spiritual.

And now let us examine passages from Whitman and Anderson, using first only the prose. Anderson writes in 1924:

And in my own time I was to see the grip of the New England, the Puritanic culture, begin to loosen. The physical incoming of the Celts, Latins, Slavs, men of the Far East, the blood of the dreaming nations of the world gradually flowing thicker and thicker in the body of the American, and the shrewd shop-keeping money-saving blood of the northern men getting thinner and thinner.⁹⁹

He repeats his thought again in this manner:

⁹⁸See Whitman, Vistas, pp.1-83, for a further discussion of this doctrine or theory.

⁹⁹Anderson, Story, p.101.

For while our schools and colleges and in our literature the puritan, the New Englander ruled, people were pouring into America from all over western Europe. The cold blood of the men of the North was being mixed constantly with the warmer blood of the South. Italians came. The Greeks and the southern Slavs came in hundreds of thousands. The eager highly temperamental Jews and the imaginative Celts poured in. On the West coast they got the Spaniard and the Mexican, and no man ever, I believe, accused the Spaniard or the Mexican of being puritanic.¹⁰⁰

Yet Whitman, as early as 1856, writes:

These States are the amplest poem,
Here is not merely a nation but a
teeming Nation of nations,¹⁰¹

and later, in 1872, he continues:

Sail, sail thy best, ship of Democracy,
Of value is thy freight, 'tis not the
Present only,
The Past is also stored in thee,
Thou holdest not the venture of thyself
alone, not of the Western continent
alone,
Earth's résumé entire floats on thy keel
O ship, is steadied by thy spars,
With thee Time voyages in trust, the
antecedent nations sink or swim
with thee,
With all their ancient struggles,
martyrs, heroes, epics, wars, thou
bear'st the other continents,

¹⁰⁰ Anderson, Writer, p.9.

¹⁰¹ Whitman, Leaves, p.288. The excerpt is from "By Blue Ontario's Shore."

Theirs, theirs as much as thine, the
 destination-port triumphant;
 Steer them with good strong hand and
 wary eye O helmsman, thou carriest
 great companions,
 Venerable priestly Asia sails this day
 with thee,
 And royal feudal Europe sails with thee.¹⁰²

He sees

A new race dominating previous ones
 and grander far, with new contests,
 New politics, new literatures and re-
 ligions, new inventions and arts.¹⁰³

Like Whitman, Anderson accepted this new blood and declared that he wanted to belong to the new America which was "alive, an America that was no longer a despised cultural foster child of Europe, with unpleasant questions always being asked about its parentage, to an America that has begun to be conscious of itself as a living, home-making folk...."¹⁰⁴

Whitman, on the other hand, in his famous Democratic Vistas declared that our intellect and our imagination were still foreign. The models of our literature were concerned with the nobility, as found in Europe, having little or no regard for

¹⁰² Whitman, Leaves, pp.380-381, from "Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood."

¹⁰³ Ibid., p.22, from "Starting from Paumanok."

¹⁰⁴ Anderson, Writer, p.395.

the common people, who, to him, were the very backbone of democracy. America, he believed, needed to formulate her own ideas of culture and literature.¹⁰⁵

* Again, one hardly needs to be reminded that in Leaves of Grass Whitman concerned himself with America as an independent nation, the "New World," as he put it. He attempted to bring home to the American people the realization that theirs was a free, living nation ready for new, big things.

Another comparison between these two writers may be made in this respect; that both recognized the shortcomings of democracy. Whitman minces no words about the matter:

I would alarm and caution even the political and business reader, and to the utmost extent, against the prevailing delusion that the establishment of free political institutions, and plentiful intellectual smartness, with general good order, physical plenty, industry, etc., (desirable and precious advantages as they are,) do, of themselves, determine and yield to our experiment of democracy the fruitage of success. With such advantages at present fully, or almost fully, possess'd--(Whitman writes here of the victorious Union)--society, in these states, is canker'd, crude, superstitious, and rotten. Political, or law-made society is, and private, or voluntary society, is also. In any vigor, the element of the moral conscience, the most important, the verteber to State or man, seems to me either entirely lacking, or seriously enfeebled or ungrown.

I say we had best look at our times and lands searchingly in the face, like a physician diagnosing

¹⁰⁵The material for this paragraph is found in Whitman's Democratic Vistas, pp.34-35 and p.52.

some deep disease. Never was there, perhaps, more hollowness at heart than at present, and here in the United States. Genuine belief seems to have left us. The underlying principles of the States are not honestly believ'd in, (for all this hectic glow, and these melo-dramatic screamings,) nor is humanity itself believ'd in. What penetrating eye does not everywhere see through the mask? The spectacle is appalling. We live in an atmosphere of hypocrisy throughout. The men believe not in the women, nor the women in the men. A scornful superciliousness rules in literature. The aim of all the littérateurs is to find something to make fun of.¹⁰⁶

He continues:

The depravity of the business classes of our country is not less than has been supposed, but infinitely greater. The official services of America, national, state, and municipal, in all their branches and departments, except the judiciary is tainted. The great cities weck with respectable as much as non-respectable robbery and scoundrelism. In fashionable life, flippancy, tepid amours, weak infidelism, small aims, or no aims at all, only to kill time. In business, (this all-devouring modern word, business,) the one sole object is, by any means, pecuniary gain.¹⁰⁷

Then he turns to the cities and their teeming populaces:

But sternly discarding, shutting our eyes to the glow and grandeur of the general superficial

¹⁰⁶Whitman, Vistas, pp.11-12.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p.12.

effect [of cities], coming down to what is of the only real importance, Personalities, and examining minutely, we question, we ask, Are there, indeed, men here worthy of the name? Are there athletes? Are there perfect women to match the generous material luxuriance? Is there a pervading atmosphere of beautiful manners? Are there crops of fine youths, and majestic old persons? Are there arts worthy freedom and a rich people? Is there a great moral and religious civilization--the only justification of a great material one? Confess that to severe eyes, using the moral microscope upon humanity, a sort of dry and flat Sahara appears, these cities, crowded with petty grotesques, malformations, phantoms, playing meaningless antics.¹⁰⁸

In a short treatise entitled "Foundation Stages--Then Others," included among Notes Left Over, Whitman summarizes his thoughts: "Soon, it will be fully realized that ostensible wealth and money-making, show, luxury, etc., imperatively necessitate something beyond--namely, the same, eternal moral and spiritual--esthetic attributes, elements."¹⁰⁹

Now let us turn to Anderson, who flamboyantly voices his opinion of America's democracy. Needless to say, a swift perusal of all his writings indicates that he is keenly aware of the evils of industrialism. His bitterness is evident in this passage:

The outer surface of my life was too violently uncouth, too persistently uncouth. Well enough

¹⁰⁸ Whitman, Vistas, p.14.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.163.

for Walt Whitman and Carl Sandburg and others to sing of the strength and fineness of laboring men, making heroes of them, but already the democratic dream had faded and laborers were not my heroes. I was born fussy, liked cleanliness and orderliness about me and already had been thrown too much into the midst of shiftlessness. The socialists and communists I had seen and heard talk nearly all struck me as men who had no sense of life at all. They were so likely to be dry intellectual sterile men. Already I had begun asking myself the questions I have been asking myself ever since. "Does no man love another man? Why does not some man arise who wants the man working next to him work in the midst of order? Can a man and a woman love each other when they live in an ugly house in an ugly street? Why do working men and women so often seem perversely unclean and disorderly in their houses? Why do not factory owners realize that although they build large, well-lighted factories, they will accomplish nothing until they realize the need of order and cleanliness in thinking and feeling also?"... Was it not apparent that something had happened to the democracy on which Whitman had counted so much?¹¹⁰

In 1856 Whitman had written in the same vein:

What is your money-making now?
 what can it do now?
 What is your respectability now?
 What are your theology, tuition,
 society, traditions, statute-
 books, now?
 Where are your jibes of being now?
 Where are your cavils about the soul
 now?¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Anderson, Story, pp.141-142.

¹¹¹ Whitman, Leaves, p.161, from "Song of the Broad-Axe."

Materialism to Anderson, as to Whitman, was the greatest evil of democracy:

Democracy shall spread itself out thinner and thinner, it shall come to nothing but empty mouthings in the end. Everywhere, all over the earth, shall be the dreary commercialism and material success of, say the later Byzantine Empire. In the West and after the great dukes, the kings and the popes, the commoners--who were not commoners after all but only stole the name--are having their day. The shrewd little money-getters with the cry "democracy" on their lips shall rule for a time and then the real commoners shall come--and that shall be the worst time of all. Oh, the futile little vanity of the workers who have forgotten the cunning of hands, who have long let machines take the place of the cunning of hands!¹¹²

Again he says:

There is a tiny faint voice speaking: "The money-makers will grow weary and disgusted with their own money-making and labor shall have lost all faith, all sense of the cunning of the hand. What a mess it will be!"¹¹³

Bitterly he writes:

The smart fellows of the American Intelligentsia sat about in restaurants in New York and wrote articles for the political and semi-literary

¹¹²Anderson, Story, p.187.

¹¹³Ibid., p.189.

weeklies. A smart saying they had heard at dinner or lunch the day before was passed off as their own in the next article they wrote. The usual plan was to write of politics or politicians or to slaughter some second-rate artist--in short, to pick out easy game and kill it with their straw shafts and they gained great reputations by pointing out the asininity of men everyone already knew for asses.¹¹⁴

* The working class to Whitman and Anderson is the key to the very existence of democracy. The people who comprise this class are divine in body as well as in soul. Whatever they may touch becomes, in turn, divine and good. Beauty is their watchword, whether spiritual or physical. Their work is splendid and fine; their lives exemplify the ideal.

Whitman writes:

(Ah little recks the laborer,
How near his work is holding him
to God.
The loving Laborer through space
and time.)¹¹⁵

To him, the purpose and aim of the poet was

To teach the average man the glory
of his daily walk and trade,...

I say I bring thee Muse to-day and here,
All occupations, duties broad and close,

¹¹⁴ Anderson, Story, pp.250-251.

¹¹⁵ Whitman, Leaves, p.166, from "Song of the Exposition."

Toil, healthy toil and sweat, endless,
 without cessation,...
 Whatever forms the average, strong,
 complete, sweet-blooded man or
 woman, the perfect longeve per-
 sonality,
 And helps its present life to health
 and happiness, and shapes its soul,
 For the eternal real life to come.¹¹⁶

Anderson declares that "to the workman his materials are
 as the face of his God seen over the rim of the world. His
 materials are the promise of the coming of God to the workman."¹¹⁷
 He supplements this thought by remarking that the laborers
 have found "a kind of religion of brotherhood..."¹¹⁸

Whitman avows

All the past we leave behind,
 We debouch upon a newer mightier world,
 varied world,
 Fresh and strong the world we seize
 world of labor and the march,
 Pioneers! O pioneers!¹¹⁹

and Anderson explains that "the Modern Movement, then, seen
 from this point of view, is in reality an attempt on the part

¹¹⁶ Whitman, Leaves, p.171.

¹¹⁷ Anderson, Story, pp.294-295.

¹¹⁸ Sherwood Anderson, "Elizabethton, Tennessee," in The Nation, cxxviii (1929), 527. He facetiously ends his sentence,
 "and that is something."

¹¹⁹ Whitman, Leaves, p.195, from "Birds of Passage."

of the workman to get back into his own hands some control over the tools and materials of his craft."¹²⁰

In a poem entitled "Outlines for a Tomb," Whitman prophesies the time when

All, all the shows of laboring life,
 City and country, women's, men's and
 children's,
 Their wants provided for, hued in
 the sun and tinged for once with
 joy
 Marriage, the street, the factory,
 farm, the house-room, lodging-
 room,
 Labor and toil, the bath, gymnasium,
 playground, library, college,
 The student, boy or girl, led forward
 to be taught,
 The sick cared for, the shoeless shod,
 the orphan father'd and mother'd,
 The hungry fed, the houseless housed;
 (The intentions perfect and divine,
 The workings, details, haply human.)¹²¹

And Anderson writes;

What a day it would be--the day I mean when all workmen came to a certain decision--that they would no longer put their hands to cheap materials or do cheap hurried work--for their manhood's sake.

And what a day also--when those who are so concerned with the fate of mankind quit talking so much about housing, food, starving children and wages.

¹²⁰Anderson, Writer, pp.31-32. The "point of view" mentioned is the idea that the workman attempts to express in the product produced by his hands some need of his inner self. See pp.30-31.

¹²¹Whitman, Leaves, p.320, from "Autumn Rivulets."

As well let the body starve or freeze at once
as to go on forever starving and freezing the
workman impulse in men.¹²²

Whitman states the idea again in this way:

You workwomen and workmen of these
States having your own divine
and strong life,
And all else giving place to men
and women like you.¹²³

Anderson writes: "I do not like ugliness but to me the
soil, the houses in which poor people live, the overalls of
workers, the brown strong gnarled hands of workers are not
ugly."¹²⁴ The whole of Leaves of Grass by Whitman is a cele-
bration of the humble laborer, the "hero,"¹²⁵ whose entire
life, spiritual and physical, is beautiful. In the majority of
Anderson's publications, however, the futility of the worker's
life is portrayed; no matter how fine a character the laborer
may possess he is beaten down by the adverse circumstances
of mere existence.¹²⁶

¹²²Anderson, Notebook, pp.17-18.

¹²³Whitman, Leaves, p.185, from "A Song for Occupations."

¹²⁴Anderson, Notebook, p.168.

¹²⁵See Whitman, Leaves, p.73, in "Song of Myself."

¹²⁶See Anderson's novels.

*Parallel to this democratic conception of mankind is the belief of these writers in their ability to assume the identities of other people. Whitman says:

I am the mate and companion of people,
all just as immortal and fathomless
as myself.¹²⁷

and Anderson says: "I talk to men, make love to women, play with children. I am, in fancy and during one day, a dozen other men. I live inside them, pick up objects with their fingers, think their thoughts, feel what they feel."¹²⁸

Whitman writes:

Not a youngster is taken for larceny
but I go up too, and am tried and
sentenced.¹²⁹

Anderson echoes the thought: "I am a young boy, a vagrant picked up by the police."¹³⁰

Anderson again writes:

¹²⁷ Whitman, Leaves, p.73, from "Song of Myself."

¹²⁸ Anderson, Notebook, p.130.

¹²⁹ Whitman, Leaves, p.61, from "Song of Myself."

¹³⁰ Anderson, Notebook, p.62.

My body does not belong to me.
 My body belongs to tired women
 who have found no lovers.
 It belongs to half men and half women.
 My body belongs to those who lust
 and those who shrink from lusting.
 My body belongs to the roots of trees.
 It shall be consumed with fire on a
 far horizon.
 The smoke that arises from my
 burning body shall make the western
 skies golden.
 My body belongs to a Virginia mob
 that runs to kill negroes. It be-
 longs to a woman whose husband was
 killed in a railroad wreck. It be-
 longs to an old man dying by a fire
 in a wood, to a negress who is on
 her knees scrubbing floors, to a
 millionaire who drives an automobile.
 My body belongs to one whose son has
 killed a man and has been sent to
 prison.
 It belongs to those who have the lust
 for killing and to those who kill.
 My body is a stick a strong man has
 stuck in the ground. It is a post
 a drunkard has leaned against.
 My body is a cunning wind. It is a
 thought in the night, a wound that
 bleeds, the breath of a god, the
 quivering end of a song.¹³¹

Yet Whitman in 1855 wrote these lines:

I am of old and young, of the foolish
 as much as the wise,
 Regardless of others, ever regardful
 of others,
 Maternal as well as paternal, a child
 as well as a man,

¹³¹ Sherwood Anderson, A New Testament, New York, 1927, pp.
 26-27. The name of the poem is "The Healer."

Stuff'd with the stuff that is coarse
 and stuff'd with the stuff that
 is fine,
 One of the Nation of many nations,
 the smallest the same and the
 largest the same,
 A Southerner soon as a Northerner, a
 planter nonchalant and hospitable
 down by the Oconee I live,
 A Yankee bound my own way ready for
 trade, my joints the limberest
 joints on earth and the sternest
 joints on earth,
 A Kentuckian walking the vale of the
 Elkhorn in my deer-skin leggings,
 a Louisianian or Georgian,
 A boatman over lakes or bays or along
 coasts, a Hoosier, Badger, Buck-
 eye;
 At home on Kanadian snow-shoes or
 up in the bush, or with fishermen
 off Newfoundland,
 At home in the fleet of ice-boats,
 sailing with the rest and tacking,
 At home on the hills of Vermont, or in
 the woods of Maine, or the Texan
 ranch,
 Comrade of Californians, comrade of
 free North-Westerners, (loving their
 big proportions,)
 Comrade of raftsmen and coalmen, comrade
 of all who shake hands and welcome
 to drink and meat,
 A learner with the simplest, a teacher
 of the thoughtfulest,
 A novice beginning yet experient of
 myriads of seasons,
 Of every hue and caste am I, of every
 rank and religion,
 A farmer, mechanic, artist, gentleman,
 sailor, quaker,
 Prisoner, fancy-man, rowdy, lawyer,
 physician, priest.¹³²

¹³² Whitman, Leaves, pp. 37-38, from "Song of Myself."

Although Whitman does make his catalogue more inclusive, the reader realizes at once that here is probably the germ of Anderson's idea.

These parallels, then, indicate the realization that Anderson, two generations removed from Whitman, was surprisingly akin to the latter in his theories of democracy; the existence of which depends mainly upon the working class. He, like Whitman, declared the spiritual life to be a necessary part of this democracy. Like his predecessor again, he desired an American literature and a truly American life distinct from that of Europe.¹³³

B. Religion

Whitman, although he denied the fact, had the romantic point of view concerning religion. He believed in divine immanence; he felt that God or the soul was in everything. To him, earth was as divine as heaven, the body as divine as the soul. Death is welcomed by him as joyously as life.

Anderson, on the other hand, contradicts himself in his account of God, who obviously is not as important to his attitude toward life as God is to Whitman. Nowhere does Whitman deny God as Anderson does in his autobiography.¹³⁴ Yet he

¹³³See Anderson's Notebook, pp.196-198 and Whitman's Vistas, pp.4-5.

¹³⁴See Anderson's Story, p.270.

writes later, "Man, even the brave and free Man, is somewhat a less worthy object of glorification than God:"¹³⁵ and his A New Testament (1927) has general references to the Almighty and to Christ. He even writes, "I am one who would serve God."¹³⁶

Both authors, however, have the same confidence in actual personal contact with God after death. Whitman says:

My rendezvous is appointed, it is certain,
The Lord will be there and wait till I
come on perfect terms,¹³⁷

while Anderson writes:

There shall be a way found by which
I may go through a street to the
door of God's house. I shall find
words to lay on my lips.
I shall find words to speak at the
door of God's house.¹³⁸

Anderson's

God lies on the ground in the forest

¹³⁵See Anderson's Story, p.301.

¹³⁶Anderson, Testament, p.86.

¹³⁷Whitman, Leaves, p.70, from "Song of Myself."

¹³⁸Anderson, Testament, p.31, from "A Dreamer."

with his head at the base of a tree.
 The fingers of God flutter like the
 wings of a gnat.
 A little leaf in the forest, touched
 by the finger of God, whirls and
 twists in an agony of delight.¹³⁹

is reminiscent of Whitman's conception of God. In the same
 vein he later proclaims:

He did not teach me much of God but
 fragments of God's truth clung to me.¹⁴⁰

Then too, "The Visit in the Morning," a long poem, is
 worthy of full-length quotation because of its Whitmanesque
 expression and attitude. The use of the sea is also quite
 typical of Whitmanic style.

It was by the sea--
 I was lying on my belly and God
 came and turned me over.
 He turned my face out of the sand,
 the yellow sightless sand.

God caressed me and his caress was
 gentle and soft.
 Out of my eyes he took what was
 sightless,
 Out of my ears deafness.

It has been permitted me to live
 and that was sweet before your time.

¹³⁹Anderson, Testament, pp.38-39, from "Ambition."

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p.86. The "he" is an old man who talks to the
 poet about God. The poem is entitled "Word Factories."

The Divine inheritance God gave in
the morning.

He kissed my lips, my breasts, my
arms.

Then my lips again.

Have you walked by a mountain?

Have you walked by the sea?

I have been in the veins of the mountains,
I have been in each drop of water God
spat out of his mouth.

A wind blowing out of my ears troubled
the waters of the seas.

God came to me as a bird comes out
of a bush--softly--into a breaking day.

God came to me in a glaring light.

I have gone into you.

I have become of you.

In my pocket is the key to your house.

In my veins your blood flows.

The breath of you inflates my lungs.

The sweetness of you sleeps in my sleep.

If you do not understand what I am
saying that is of no importance.

That the wind blows in trees and that
deaf men walk under the branches
leading the sightless is of no
importance.

I was by the sea when God came to me.

He turned me over, turned my face out
of the eyeless yellow sand.

He kissed my lips and I became alive.¹⁴¹

And again Anderson writes:

¹⁴¹Anderson, Testament, pp.54-56, from "The Visit in the
Morning."

Do you believe--now listen--I do.
 Say, you--now listen--do you
 believe the hand of God reached
 down to me in the flood? I do.
 'Twas like a streak of fire along
 my back. That's a lie, of course.
 The face of God looked down at
 me, over the rim of the world.¹⁴²

Whitman, of course, expresses his mystical experiences much better than Anderson. He writes:

I mind how once we lay such a trans-
 parent summer morning,
 How you settled your head athwart my
 hips and gently turn'd over upon me.
 And parted the shirt from my bosom-
 bone, and plunged your tongue to
 my bare-stript heart,
 And reach'd till you felt my beard,
 and reach'd till you held my feet.¹⁴³

Again he says:

I throw myself upon your breast my
 father,
 I cling to you so that you cannot
 unloose me,
 I hold you so firm till you answer
 me something.

¹⁴²Sherwood Anderson, Mid-American Chants, New York and London, 1928, p.18.

¹⁴³Whitman, Leaves, p.27, from "Song of Myself." The "you" is the soul or the spirit of God.

Kiss me my father,
 Touch me with your lips as I touch
 these I love,
 Breathe to me while I hold you close
 the secret of the murmuring I envy.¹⁴⁴

A most interesting characteristic of these authors with regard to their spiritual beliefs is their self-identification with Christ. This egotistical conception is seldom found among writers.

Here we have Whitman referring to himself as

Walking the old hills of Judaea with
 the beautiful gentle God by my side,¹⁴⁵

and

Taking myself the exact dimensions
 of Jehovah,¹⁴⁶

and again

And I know that the hand of God is

¹⁴⁴Whitman, Leaves, p.217, from "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life." "Father" refers to the spirit of God. Also interesting to note is that the setting of the entire poem is along the seashore, as is Anderson's poem.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p.54, from "Song of Myself."

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p.63.

the promise of my own,
And I know that the spirit of God
is the brother of my own.¹⁴⁷

He even visualizes the last days of Christ:

That I could forget the mockers and
insults!
That I could forget the trickling
tears and the blows of the bludgeons
and hammers!
That I could look with a separate
look on my own crucifixion and
bloody crowning!¹⁴⁸

Anderson writes of Christ in the same manner. In a prose-poem, "Testament of an Old Man," he refers to his brain as a "hound mind" which "has run beside Jesus the Prince as he walked alone on a mountain";¹⁴⁹ a thought which he repeats, "My hound mind has been into the mountains with Jesus."¹⁵⁰ Again, he writes: "Who knew how I knelt before lives, how like a white Christ I hungered and loved my way into lives."¹⁵¹ Complete identification with Christ is found in these lines:

¹⁴⁷ Whitman, Leaves, p.27.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p.61.

¹⁴⁹ Anderson, Testament, p.34.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p.36.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p.36.

I am the Christ you crucified.
 Why did you bring me the Christ
 that died?¹⁵²

It may be concluded, then, that both believed in a humane God, in immortality, and in self-identification with Christ. It is evident, however, that Whitman was much more religious than Anderson, and that he could express his mystical experiences with a more ardent fervor than could the latter.

C. Sex

Both Whitman and Anderson are keenly interested in sex, with the result that critics have accused them of indecency. It must be admitted that this is often true; yet there are times when each expresses his doctrine of the sexual relationship of men and women in a splendid manner. Both feel the sacredness of the human body and deplore the "Puritanism" of the average person. To both, "motherhood" or "fatherhood" alike, as Whitman puts it, is sacred. Sexual love, lust, prostitution, homosexuality exist and should be written of as a part of human life in the frankest manner.

Whitman in his "Song of Myself," "Calamus," and "Children of Adam" sections in Leaves of Grass deals with spiritual and

¹⁵²Anderson, Testament, p.45, from "Singing Swamp Negro."

physical love in all its phases as do the writings of Anderson.
Whitman boastfully chants

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good
belongs to you,¹⁵³

as does Anderson, whose lines

I am the man.
I am in the body of the man.
I, the singer, live in his body¹⁵⁴

frankly echo his predecessor.

"The flesh of my body is become good",¹⁵⁵ "the inside of my body was made clean,"¹⁵⁶ declares Anderson echoing his fore-runner, who boasted, "I dote on myself, there is that lot of me and all so luscious,"¹⁵⁷ and "Divine am I inside and out."¹⁵⁸

To these men the love of man for woman is a natural phenomenon worthy of exultation and celebration. Both have

¹⁵³ Whitman, Leaves, p.24, from "Song of Myself."

¹⁵⁴ Anderson, Testament, p.106, from "Two Glad Men."

¹⁵⁵ Anderson, Chants, p.12.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p.26.

¹⁵⁷ Whitman, Leaves, p.45, from "Song of Myself."

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p.44.

defended their points of view in a similar manner. Whitman declared his Leaves of Grass to be primarily a song of sex, so much a part of his whole plan that the majority of his poems might well have remained unwritten were it omitted. To him, sexuality is an important element in literature.¹⁵⁹ Anderson bases the defense of his own writings on the hypothesis of the so-called "Modern Movement" with its frank treatment of sex.¹⁶⁰

Whitman celebrates the love of a man for a woman in such poems as "Song of Myself," "To a Common Prostitute," "The Sleepers," and the "Children of Adam" section. Anderson does the same thing in "Song of Theodore," "The Stranger," "Song of the Love of Women," "The Lover," "Song of the Mating Time," "Song Long After," "Reminiscent Song," found in Mid-American Chants.

Anderson declares:

You have come to me out of the arms
of your lovers.
You have come to me out of your warm
close place.
You have lost yourself in the
nothingness.
You are a leaf tossed in a wind.
You are a blade of grass torn out
of the ground.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹Whitman, Vistas, pp.135-136.

¹⁶⁰See Anderson's Story, pp.373-379 and his article, "America on a Cultural Jag," in The Saturday Review of Literature, iv (1927), 364-365.

¹⁶¹Anderson, Testament, p.17, from "Testament."

Whitman, too, had said

I draw you close to me, you women,
I cannot let you go, I would do
you good,¹⁶²

and had used the same figure of speech as Anderson in these lines:

Tenderly will I use you curling grass,
It may be you transpire from the
breasts of young men,
It may be if I had known them I
would have loved them.¹⁶³

This use of symbolism in connection with sex is carried still further by these poets. Anderson declares:

I am but one man but in my loins is
the seed that shall be planted in
fields and in town. The lords of
life shall come into the land.¹⁶⁴

And again:

Deep in my old valley lies the
naked man.

¹⁶²Whitman, Leaves, p.87, from "A Woman Waits for Me."

¹⁶³Ibid., p.28, from "Song of Myself."

¹⁶⁴Anderson, Testament, p.105, from "Two Glad Men."

He is a seed,
 Seeds sleep in him.
 My man shall be the father of a
 tribe, a race.
 He is the world and all the world
 has been asleep in him.¹⁶⁵

In his prose-poem, "Motherhood,"¹⁶⁶ the word "seed" has again been employed in a striking metaphor.

This idea of sex is similarly found in Whitman, who writes:

I shall look for loving crops from
 the birth, life, death, immor-
 tality, I plant so lovingly now,¹⁶⁷

and who declares that he sings

Of seeds dropping into the ground,
 of births.¹⁶⁸

It is a noticeable fact, too, that these writers deal with the prostitute who, to them, has her place in society and so should be written about. Whitman has two poems, "To

¹⁶⁵Anderson, Chants, p.52.

¹⁶⁶Sherwood Anderson, The Triumph of the Egg, New York, 1921, pp.168-170.

¹⁶⁷Whitman, Leaves, p.88, from "A Woman Waits for Me."

¹⁶⁸Ibid., p.409, from "Thoughts."

a Common Prostitute" and "Once I Pass'd through a Populous City," as does Andersen whose "Song of the Love of Women" and "Song Long After" deal with this type of person. Both have references to the prostitute scattered throughout their works.

Thus, these comparisons indicate an unusual open-minded attitude toward sex in its various phases. To them, physical love is an important phase of our democracy and should be sensibly and frankly treated.

A minor parallel, not necessarily concerned with sex, but a most eccentric one, follows. Whitman writes in 1855:

There is something in staying close to
men and women and looking on them,
and in the contact and odor of them,
that pleases the soul well,¹⁶⁹

and Anderson remarks, "And I get also a kind of aroma from people."¹⁷⁰ The idea of people exuding an individual odor or aroma is certainly unusual and not usually found, so that it is probable that Anderson received the idea directly from his forerunner of realistic expression.

The doctrine of "amativeness" love of man for man, is a theory of Whitman's which has been subjected to much reproach and conjecture. This type of love seemed to him a vital part

¹⁶⁹ Whitman, Leaves, p.81, from "I Sing the Body Electric." My italics.

¹⁷⁰ Anderson, Notebook, p.47.

of our so-called democracy, in fact its true foundation. His "Calamus" section¹⁷¹ offers the key to this conception. Anderson does not hold to this entire doctrine but he does write of mutual love.

If you men who are my friends and those of you who are acquaintances could surrender yourselves to me for just a little while.

I tell you what--I would take you within myself and carry you around within me as though I were a pregnant woman,¹⁷²

is Anderson's method of expressing his sentiment toward this idea. Whitman has written:

(Still here I carry my old delicious burdens,
I carry them, men and women, I carry
them with me whenever I go,
I swear it is impossible for me to
get rid of them,
I am fill'd with them; and I will
fill them in return.)¹⁷³

To quote Anderson again:

¹⁷¹ Whitman, Leaves, pp.95-113.

¹⁷² Anderson, Testament, p.11, from "A Young Man."

¹⁷³ Whitman, Leaves, p.124, from "Song of the Open Road."

You are a man and I would take hold
of your hand;¹⁷⁴

I am on a couch by this window and
I could ask a woman to come here to
lie with me or a man either for that
matter;¹⁷⁵

Good brother, walking up and down,
it is my voice you hear calling to
you out of a city;¹⁷⁶

and again in Mid-American Chants:

O my beloved--men and women--I
come into your presence. It is
night and I am alone and I come
to you.... See, I embrace you.
I take you in my arms and I run
away;¹⁷⁷

... My cunning fingers are of the
flesh. They are like me and I would
make love always, to all people--
men and women--here--in Chicago--
in America--everywhere--always--
forever--while my life lasts.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴Anderson, Testament, p.24, from "Hunger."

¹⁷⁵Ibid., p.97, from "Young Man Filled with Feeling of Power."

¹⁷⁶Ibid., p.100, from "Brother."

¹⁷⁷Anderson, Chants, p.25. The sentences omitted read: "I open the window of my room so that you may come in. I am a lover and I would touch you with the fingers of my hands. In my eyes a fire burns. The strength of my imaginings is beyond words to record. I see the loveliness in you that is hidden away. I take something from you."

¹⁷⁸Ibid., p.25. The sentences omitted are: "I am alone in my room at night and in me is the spirit of the old priests. What cunning fingers I have. They make intricate designs on the white paper. See, the designs are words and sentences. I am not a priest but a lover, a new kind of lover, one who is of the flesh and not of the flesh."

True, these quotations contain only the germ of homosexuality; yet, they are surprisingly like Whitman.

Whoever you are holding me now in hand;¹⁷⁹

I have loved many women and men,
but I love none better than you;¹⁸⁰

I will write the evangel-poem of
comrades and of love,
For who but I should understand love
with all its sorrow and joy?
And who but I should be the poet of
comrades?¹⁸¹

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as
good belongs to you;¹⁸²

I do not ask who you are, that is
not important to me,
You can do nothing and be nothing
but what I will enfold you.¹⁸³

A thorough study of the "Calamus" poems, however, very definitely emphasizes the fact that Anderson's handling of similar material is rather passive and ineffectual, which may be the result of imitation.

¹⁷⁹ Whitman, Leaves, p.97, from "Whoever You are Holding Me Now in Hand."

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p.198, from "To You."

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p.15, from "Starting from Paumanok."

¹⁸² Ibid., p.24, from "Song of Myself."

¹⁸³ Ibid., p.63.

Whitman and Anderson felt themselves passive persons who were a part of the endless moving and swarming of things about them--the "float," as they termed it. This "float" obviously leads to contradiction and confusion, which may readily explain Anderson's cry, "I am a child, a confused child in a confused world."¹⁸⁴ Leaves of Grass and A New Testament are the epitomes of this doctrine.

D. Verse Technique

Whitman's Leaves of Grass was the first volume of modern "free verse" written in the English language, although William Blake had published during the preceding century his Prophetic Books, in which the material was neither prose nor verse.¹⁸⁵ Since its publication in 1855, many volumes of this type have appeared, which include Mid-American Chants and A New Testament. A comparison of the three volumes mentioned discloses marked similarities in verse technique. So-called "run-on" lines, in which the thought carries over from one line to the next, occur very rarely. In each, a line of verse is a sentence, in that it contains a single thought. Reiteration is common in these works; rhyme is only occasional; and slang is an accepted

¹⁸⁴ Anderson, Chants, p.13.

¹⁸⁵ See Eliss Perry's biography, Walt Whitman, p.187.

feature. The rhythm of the verses is that of the chants of the Old Testament.

A perusal of ten pages of Whitman's "Song of Myself"¹⁸⁶ reveals no "run-on" lines, while an investigation of the first eight poems in Mid-American Chants¹⁸⁷ (approximately equivalent to ten pages of Leaves of Grass) discloses only one such line:

Love,
I awake.¹⁸⁸

In both writers, as has been stated, reiteration is a common device. This repetition often occurs at the beginning of the lines; such as, Whitman's "And I" and "I will" in the poem, "Starting from Paumanok,"¹⁸⁹ and Anderson's "I want" and "Let" of his poem, "Song of the Middle World."¹⁹⁰

A monstrously bad poem, "The Red-Throated Black," by Anderson, has the phrase, "Give me the word," repeated eighteen times in forty-five lines,¹⁹¹ while Whitman's "Excelsior" of

¹⁸⁶ Whitman, Leaves, pp.24-33.

¹⁸⁷ Anderson, Chants, pp.11-24.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p.21. Forty-nine poems appear in this volume, in which are found forty-seven "run-on" lines. None at all occurs in A New Testament.

¹⁸⁹ Whitman, Leaves, pp.14-15.

¹⁹⁰ Anderson, Chants, p.35.

¹⁹¹ Anderson, Testament, pp.42-43.

is also the case of the

... in the ... of the ...
... (...) ...
... ..

... ..
... ..
... ..
... ..
... ..
... ..
... ..
... ..
... ..
... ..

... ..

... ..

... ..

... ..

twelve lines, incidentally just as bad, uses initial repetition for the entire poem.¹⁹²

It must be admitted, however, that Whitman employs this device of reiteration to a much greater extent than does Anderson; yet, it must be remembered that the former wrote many more poems than the latter. That both fail in their attempt to use successfully such a device is to be expected. The monotony alone is sufficient to ruin the desired beauty or effect.

Whitman and Anderson were tremendously interested in words, especially those which were entirely native to America. The former wrote his An American Primer, in which he pleaded for a language in America suitable to all its industries and interests. Anderson throughout his autobiographies discusses his art as a writer and admits his keen interest in Gertrude Stein because of her unusual use of words.¹⁹³ He has written also a rather long poem entitled "Word Factories"¹⁹⁴ which, though exceedingly bad, is an expression of his own theory of the use of words.

Comparison of these two writers leads to the discovery of striking similarities in discussion of the function of words. Whitman has written:

¹⁹²Whitman, Leaves, pp.397-398.

¹⁹³Anderson, Notebook, p.49.

¹⁹⁴Anderson, Testament, pp.86-88.

A perfect writer would make words sing, dance, kiss, do the male and female act, bear children, weep, bleed, rage, stab, steal, fire cannon, steer ships, sack cities, charge with cavalry or infantry, or do anything, that man or woman or the natural powers can do.¹⁹⁵

Anderson says:

Words are everything. I swear to you I have not lost my faith in words.

Do I not know? While I walked in the street there were such words came, in ordered array! I tell you what--words have color, smell; one may sometimes feel them with the fingers as one touches the cheek of a child.¹⁹⁶

The latter deplores the fact that few native American words are used by American writers because of the fact that the English command our words and marshal them in too perfect order.¹⁹⁷ Whitman continually advocated the use of our own "aboriginal" words and slang; he has said; "I think I am done with many of the words of the past hundred centuries.--I am mad that their poems, bibles, words, still rule and represent earth, and are not yet superseded."¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Whitman, Primer, p.16.

¹⁹⁶ Anderson, Story, p.291.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., pp.360-361.

¹⁹⁸ Whitman, Primer, p.12.

Both authors were interested in the body and consequently desired expressive words for it. Anderson writes; "Words for every act of the body, for dark and gay thoughts";¹⁹⁹ and Whitman wrote: "A true composition in words, returns the human body, male or female--that is the most perfect composition and shall be best-loved by men and women, and shall last the longest, which slights no part of the body, and repeats no part of the body."²⁰⁰

Both men considered the negro an important factor in the formation of the American language.²⁰¹ Modern America was to be sung about with no regard for the respectability of the words used.²⁰²

Whitman was exceedingly fond of "aboriginal" names and used them profusely in his poetry; Anderson attempts, almost timidly it is true, to do the same thing. He says:

... Keokuk, Tennessee, Michigan,
Chicago, Kalamazoo--don't the names
in this country make you fairly drunk?²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ Anderson, Notebook, p.135.

²⁰⁰ Whitman, Primer, pp.27-28.

²⁰¹ See Anderson's book, Notebook, p.135 and Whitman's Primer, p.24.

²⁰² See Anderson's Notebook, p.135, and the entire volume of An American Primer by Whitman.

²⁰³ Anderson, Chants, p.16.

Both writers speak of words as being "male and female," a conception not general to most people. That Anderson secured the idea from Whitman and enlarged upon it seems evident when his poem, "Word Factories," is studied.²⁰⁴

IV

Conclusion

The evidence presented in this chapter, Part I, attempts to show that American critics have connected Anderson with Whitman, both directly and indirectly, from 1918 to 1934, during the time in which their reviews appeared. These twenty-four critical analyses, however, presented no parallel passages from the works of the poets; thus, their decisions remain literary rather than scholarly.

An endeavor in Part II has been made also to verify Anderson's familiarity with the writings of Whitman. His autobiographies indicate that Anderson read avidly and that Whitman was included in his reading. He placed Whitman with Dreiser as the two foremost advocates for a better type of workman. In a criticism on a production of one of his contemporaries, Anderson declared that Whitman made "people clean and nice again."

²⁰⁴See Whitman's Primer, p.25, and Anderson's Testament, p.86.

Anderson's introduction to Charles Cullen's illustrated Leaves of Grass contained high praise. "Whitman is in the bones of America," he announced. He called the good gray poet "the real American singer" and declared that America needs to return to the dreams and principles of Whitman.

In a personal letter written to the writer of this study Anderson indicated that he considered Whitman the most significant poet of the United States.

The third section of this chapter is subdivided into four parts; democracy, religion, sex, and verse technique. Parallel passages from Anderson and Whitman show a passionate interest and belief in democracy. Both writers accept and laud the mergence of the immigrants from many European nations into one great unit, America; but both insisted that this mergence be whole-hearted and complete. The faults and evils of this democracy, however, were recognized by these two far-seeing men. To them, materialism was perhaps the greatest transgression of democracy. Both authors deplored America's industrialism and standardization, although Anderson exceeded Whitman in bitterness against the latter phase, which was undoubtedly due to the fact that Whitman had seen only its origin and not its crest as Anderson had. These short-comings, however, seemed to them to be somewhat redeemed by the divinity within the workmen and the masses of the nation. These people, then, were to be the salvation of America's democracy.

Parallel to this conception of the purpose of mankind is their assumption of the personality and identity of other persons. All classes of people were included by them, probably with the intention of securing a more definite understanding of their theory of democracy on the part of their readers.

Religion, although far more important to Whitman, interested Anderson in somewhat the same way as it did the former. Both donned and doffed the cloak of Christ's personality as they desired; yet no sacrilege is apparent in either. Their mystical experiences are indeed comparable, but again Whitman excels in giving them moving expression. Both writers have the firm conviction of immortality with all its implication of personal contact with God and Christ after death. Both employ sexual imagery in their attempt to describe their religious reactions. Perhaps their most interesting mode of presenting their Christian faith is their self-identification with Christ, done in an amazingly devout fashion with no intention of mockery or profanation.

Changing conventions have brought with them a changed attitude toward sex. Whitman daringly wrote of the body and its functions and used sexual imagery, and Anderson followed in his trail. Physical love in all its phases, bad as well as good, is a part of our civilization and should be written of with utter frankness--such was the doctrine of these two authors. Both felt the sacredness of the human body and deplored the "Puritanism" of the average person. To them parenthood

is sacred and the highest calling of mankind. Both employ symbols taken from nature to describe physical love.

Noticeable too is their frank treatment of the prostitute who has her place in society; no attempt is made by either to excuse , reject, or decry her.

The love of man for man, or "amativeness" as the phrenologists have termed it, was considered by Whitman to be vital to the principle of democracy, but Anderson's attitude as compared with his predecessor's seems passive and ineffectual, which may be the result of imitation as opposed to sincere personal belief.

To turn from content to form the reader discovers that Anderson has followed Whitman's verse technique rather closely in his Mid-American Chants and A New Testament. So-called "run-on" lines occur very rarely in their poetry, each line of verse containing one thought. The repetition of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences are typical of both poets. Rhyme is only occasional and when it does appear seems to be accidental rather than purposeful. The rhythm of their poetry is similar to that of the chants found in the Old Testament. It is indeed significant, moreover, that no other American poet between Whitman and Anderson used this particular type of verse technique.

Both Whitman and Anderson were keenly interested in words, employing slang frequently and "aboriginal" words, as Whitman referred to them. Both desired freedom from the sedate language

used by the English, advocating the use of terms suitable to all the interests and industries of America as a separate, proud nation. Americanized words were the goal of these two writers.

Here has been presented, then, those similarities and comparisons which may be made between Whitman and Anderson. No attempt has been made to prove that Anderson kept Whitman by him constantly as he wrote, but that he remembered the writings of his predecessor seems evident. The parallels indicated are of exceedingly great interest to the student of American literature, for in them is reasonable evidence of the far-reaching influence of Walt Whitman. That there is an astonishing amount of Whitman's theories and principles in Anderson is obvious, and perhaps not surprising in one who has written, "I think that any American writer who was not influenced by Walt Whitman would be dead to the work of our most significant poet."

Chapter III

Walt Whitman and Carl Sandburg

I

American Criticisms of Sandburg

The appearance of Carl Sandburg's Chicago Poems in 1916 gave critics ample opportunity for turbulent, contradictory charges, but they did agree upon one point--Sandburg's brutality. It remained for Louis Untermeyer two years later, however, to comment upon the poet's marked resemblance in content and style to Walt Whitman. To this critic, Sandburg's poems in Chicago Poems (1916) and Cornhuskers (1918) seemed "a direct answer to Whitman's hope of a democratic poetry that would express itself in a democratic and even a distinctly American speech."²⁰⁵

²⁰⁵Louis Untermeyer, "Strong Timber," in The Dial, lxx (1918), 264.

Two years later Paul L. Benjamin dwelt upon Sandburg's love of the commonplace and his unusual use of words, both traits of Whitman, and aptly compared the excellent poetic melody created by the two poets.²⁰⁶

The following year Paul Rosenfield declared that Sandburg was "doing in his Chicago of the new century what Whitman was doing in the Manhattan of Civil War times: burning the mists off the befogged land, striving to create out of the inanimate steel and the loveless dirt, the living thing America."²⁰⁷ He, too, marked the unusual humanity of Sandburg and his ardent desire to represent the common laborer. This critic referred to the occasional flashes of genius leaping out of "chaos," an observation justly applicable to Whitman.²⁰⁸ Sandburg, to him, was one of the "poet-priests of America," the first who in general had brought "the sound of voices singing beautifully," and who breathed "the salt, pungent perfume of our soil."²⁰⁹

Another reviewer, Walter Yust, remarked that Sandburg was considered by Europeans as the most authentic voice of America since Whitman, whose An American Primer seemed to call for just

²⁰⁶Paul L. Benjamin, "A Poet of the Common-Place," in The Survey, xlv (1920), 12-13.

²⁰⁷Paul Rosenfield, "Carl Sandburg," in The Bookman, 1111 (1921), 389.

²⁰⁸See ibid., 1111, 393.

²⁰⁹Ibid., 1111, 395. Compare with Whitman's theory of the poet's duty in his Preface of 1855 (Whitman, Leaves, pp.488-507).

such a fearless user of words.²¹⁰

An anonymous review appeared in The New York Times (reprinted in The Bookman) in which was discussed the Whitmanic catalogues of Sandburg. The declaration was made that since "no writer is without a literary tradition or literary influences of some sort, because no one writes without previously reading," Sandburg's tradition is "Whitman, journalism, and to a slighter extent modern vers libre poets, just as Whitman's tradition was journalism and prose translations of epic poetry."²¹¹ To this critic all of Sandburg's pages displayed indebtedness to Whitman, "even to the extent of using phrases from Leaves of Grass--'hairy, hankering.'"²¹²

In 1922 Percy H. Boynton remarked that Sandburg, even as Dante, Chaucer, Wordsworth, and Whitman, used language suitable to the subject under treatment,²¹³ but Carl Van Doren felt that Sandburg's pity for the common people often carried him to the point of bathos "so that, as Whitman did before him, he runs into long lists of objects" which overtax his imaginative power.²¹⁴

²¹⁰Walter Yust, "Carl Sandburg, Human Being," in The Bookman, 111 (1921), 285-290.

²¹¹Ibid., 111, 232-233.

²¹²Ibid., 111, 233.

²¹³Percy H. Boynton, "The Voice of Chicago: Edgar Lee Masters and Carl Sandburg," in The English Journal, xi (1922), 610-620.

²¹⁴Carl Van Doren, "Flame and Slag; Carl Sandburg: Poet with Both Fists," in The Century, cvi (1923), 789.

Harry Hansen, on the other hand, even though he did admit that many of Sandburg's poems were prose especially those containing summaries or catalogues in the Whitman manner refused to see very much of Whitman in his works: "He is not derivative even though he is often spoken of as the most successful follower of Whitman; he read Whitman early in his career but there is little of him in his poetry."²¹⁵

But Louis Untermeyer disagreed with Hansen declaring that Sandburg's "creative use of proper names and slang, the interlarding of cheapness and nobility which is Sandburg's highly personal idiom, would have given great joy to Whitman,"²¹⁶ and that "To a Contemporary Bunkshooter" seemed "almost a direct answer to Whitman's insistence that before the coming poets could become powerful, they would have to learn the use of hard powerful words; the greatest artists are, he affirmed, always simple and direct, never merely 'polite or obscure.' He loved violence in language."²¹⁷ Untermeyer continued that Sandburg's most characteristic idiom--the blending of proper names and slang--would have delighted Whitman.²¹⁸ In a later

²¹⁵Harry Hansen, Midwest Portraits: A Book of Memoirs and Friendships, New York [1923], pp.58-59.

²¹⁶Louis Untermeyer, The New Era in American Poetry, New York, 1919, p.98.

²¹⁷Untermeyer, New Era, p.100.

²¹⁸Ibid., p.107.

criticism this critic described Sandburg as "a laureate of the dusk, and in him, as in Whitman, Night finds her passionate celebrant."²¹⁹

In his volume, Modern American Poetry, Untermeyer wrote that the poems of Sandburg were undoubtedly indebted to Whitman; that they were "less sweeping but more varied"; and that they musically marked a great advance.²²⁰

Clement Wood labeled Sandburg "A Hymn from Hogwallow" and compared the first thirty-seven years of his life among the working men with that of Whitman. He quoted the first few lines from "Chicago,"²²¹ following it with these comments: "He has qualities here that Whitman lacks: a more shaped music, a vision closer to actual people. He has faults which Whitman lacked: a scantiness of vista, a skill in detail which fails before totality."²²² He declared that Whitman's use of unfamiliar rhythms prevented his recognition just as Sandburg's peculiar rhythms and slang disrupts his place in literature.²²³

The Van Doren brothers recognized Sandburg's love and

²¹⁹ Louis Untermeyer, American Poetry since 1900, New York, 1923, p.84.

²²⁰ Louis Untermeyer, Modern American Poetry: a Critical Anthology (Third revised edition), New York [1925], p.

²²¹ This poem is from Carl Sandburg's Chicago Poems, New York, 1916, p.3.

²²² Clement Wood, Poets of America, New York [1925], p.250.

²²³ See ibid., pp.260-261.

tenderness for humanity, his range of sympathies, and his use of common words but made no attempt to make the popular comparison with Whitman.²²⁴

Joseph Warren Beach admitted that the poet was largely affected by Whitman in his spirit and words, but indicated that Sandburg was more interested in form than was his predecessor. He recorded that "Sandburg proposes in one of his poems, 'chants that repeat and wave.' He is thinking perhaps of something in music, or more likely of Whitman's 'Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking.' or 'When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed.'"²²⁵

In 1926 Harriet Monroe, editor of the magazine in which the poetry of Sandburg first appeared, dwelt upon his art at some length in her Poets and Their Art (1926). She ranked his lyrics among the finest in the language, noted his employment of slang, and complimented his masterly use of refrain, but she did not directly compare him with Whitman.²²⁶

Finally in 1928 appeared an article by Esther Lolita Holcomb in which she compared the leading characteristics of subject matter and style of the two poets: fidelity to the present, concrete pictures, Americanism, catalogues, long sentences.²²⁷

²²⁴Carl and Mark Van Doren, American and British Literature since 1890, New York and London [1925], pp.31-35.

²²⁵Joseph Warren Beach, The Outlook for American Prose, Chicago [1926], p.259.

²²⁶Harriet Monroe, Poets and Their Art, New York, 1926, pp. 29-38.

²²⁷Esther Lolita Holcomb, "Whitman and Sandburg," in The English Journal, xvii (1928), 550-551.

The major portion of her article, however, is concerned with contrasting the finer points of the two writers.²²⁸

During the same year T. K. Whipple in his book Spokesmen: Modern Writers and American Life criticized Sandburg severely, finding his poetry seldom finished. Selection of sentences here and there through the chapter indicate that the same criticisms would be applicable to Whitman: "His poetry teems with concrete images of an unusual vividness"; "at his best he has tremendous passionate energy, but his energy is intermittent"; "nothing exercises a stronger fascination, whether attractive or repulsive, over his imagination than death"; and again his "rhythm is uncertain."²²⁹ This critic declared his disbelief in Sandburg's being a "mystic of the cosmic or pantheistic sort, like Walt Whitman" for the former is a skeptic.²³⁰

Alfred Kreymborg, however, recognized Sandburg as Whitman's "leading descendant," to use his own phrase, with certain reservations, for the contemporary poet seemed to him to fall below Whitman in sustaining a theme at great length. This critic discovered, however, that Sandburg had "humanized Imagism and tempered Walt's passionate creed with the salt of

²²⁸ Holcomb, "Whitman and Sandburg," pp.551-555.

²²⁹ T. K. Whipple, Spokesmen: Modern Writers and American Life, New York and London, 1928, pp.167,170,174,171 respectively.

²³⁰ Ibid., p.181.

irony. One has a feeling that Sandburg is closer than Whitman to people as they are. He loves them as romantically, but not quite so blindly. Walt was the prophet of the race, Walt himself was democracy. Sandburg is the bard of the race, the lyric companion of its by no means perfect character."²³¹ A comparison of their patriotism led Kreymborg to realize the equality of the patriotic feeling displayed by the two poets.²³²

With the same year 1930 came fewer articles but all acknowledged marked similarity between these two poets. J. V. Nash, who called Sandburg "an American Homer," admitted that at times in his poetry "the Whitman note sounds out unmistakably, as in the following lines from 'Prairie,' the first poem in Cornhuskers:

I speak of new cities and new people.
 I tell you the past is a bucket of ashes.
 I tell you yesterday is a wind gone down,
 a sun dropped in the west.
 I tell you there is nothing in the world
 only an ocean of to-morrows,
 a sky of to-morrows!"²³³

Another critic, William B. Cairns, remarked that "Sandburg is more frankly and obviously a follower of Whitman, as

²³¹ Alfred Kreymborg, Our Singing Strength, New York, 1929, p.396.

²³² Ibid., p.392.

²³³ J. V. Nash, "Carl Sandburg: an American Homer," in Open Court, xlv (1930), 638. The excerpt is from Carl Sandburg's Cornhuskers, New York, 1918, p.11.

he understands Whitman, than most recent poets. He is characterized by radical social ideas, by the use of free measures, both those suggested by Whitman and short-line lyric forms, and by a vocabulary that is coarseness and slang that often goes beyond that of his master."²³⁴ He noted, too, that "the picture of the proletariat using his own idiom must be corrected by that of the poet with his guitar chanting his verses to afternoon crowds of admiring ladies. Whitman showed similar contradictions."²³⁵

A. C. Ward in 1932 considered Sandburg's free verse inferior to Whitman's, for the latter had greater power of vision and of rhythm.²³⁶

Then the next year Granville Hicks declared that Sandburg "like Whitman, had written for the common people, not as they are, but as they may become."²³⁷

That there have been numerous other reviews and criticisms is obvious, but only those which couple Whitman and Sandburg in some manner have been considered here. Of the twenty-five discussions included, thirteen appeared within a period of six

²³⁴ William B. Cairns, A History of American Literature, New York, 1930, p.541.

²³⁵ Ibid., p.542.

²³⁶ A. C. Ward, American Literature: 1880-1930, London [1932], p.170.

²³⁷ Granville Hicks, The Great Tradition, New York, 1933, p.242.

years, 1921-1926, at which time the vers libre movement became a part of American literature. Since that time Sandburg's popularity has wavered from high to low; but, nevertheless, he has very definitely established himself as a poet to be reckoned with in America and even in Europe, where he is considered our most authentic voice.²³⁸

Perhaps more contradictory criticisms have been written concerning Sandburg than any other poet of the 1900's, with the possible exception of Emily Dickinson. Epithets ranging from "exquisite" to "brutal" have been applied to his poetry. All the other critics, however, agree upon his excellent unusual use of words, words of the lyric and words of the street. No poet, to them, has employed slang quite as effectively. The majority of them agree, too, that he has a great love and pity for the common people. But continued warfare is waged over his poetic talents; some, such as Louis Untermeyer, Harriet Monroe, Paul L. Benjamin, Paul Rosenfeld, Carl Van Doren, and Alfred Kreymborg, consider Sandburg a great poet. Others, among whom are Esther Lolita Holcomb, the reviewer for The New York Times in 1921, Clement Wood, Joseph Warren Beach, and T. K. Whipple,² regard him as inferior to Whitman. The remainder of the critics present his excellences and his faults, usually making no attempt to place him in any particular category.

²³⁸ See Walter Yust's article, "Carl Sandburg, Human Being," in The Bookman, 111 (1921), 285.

None of the critics, however, attempts the citation of comparable passages from the two poets. True, they quote excerpts from Sandburg which have general resemblances to Whitman, but no specific comparisons have been made. That Sandburg has read Whitman and has been influenced by him is indeed evident, but the significance of this influence must be carefully considered before a definite decision concerning their relationship may be made.

II

Sandburg's Opinion of Whitman

The writings of Carl Sandburg are very sparse in their reference to Walt Whitman. In an introduction to a collection of Whitman's poems published by the Modern Library,²³⁹ Sandburg carefully refrains from indicating in any way his own indebtedness to this great poet of the 'fifties; nevertheless, he does make a few rather significant statements. He writes:

In certain particulars Walt Whitman's book, "Leaves of Grass," stands by itself and is the most peculiar and noteworthy monument amid the work of American literature.

²³⁹

Walt Whitman, Poems, New York, n.d., pp.iii-xi. The Modern Library Series.

First, as to style. In a large and growing circle of readers and critics, it is regarded as the most original book, the most decisively individual, the most sublimely personal creation in American literary art.

Second, as to handling by critics and commentators. It is the most highly praised and most deeply damned book that ever came from an American printing press as the work of an American writer; no other book can compete with it in the number of bouquets handed it by distinguished bystanders on one side of the street and in the number of hostile and nasty brickbats flung by equally distinguished bystanders on the other side of the street.

Third, as to personality. It is the most intensely personal book in American literature, living grandly to its promissory line, "who touches this touches a man," spilling its multitude of confessions with the bravery of a first-rate autobiography.

Fourth, as to scope of life work. It packs within its covers, does "Leaves of Grass," the life and thought and feeling of one man; it was first published when the author was 36 years of age and he actually never wrote another book even though he lived to be 73 years of age; what he did all the rest of his life after publishing the first edition of "Leaves of Grass," was to rewrite and extend the first book.

Fifth, as to literary rank abroad. No other American poet, except Poe, has the name, the persistent audiences across decades of time, and the pervasive influence, credited to Walt Whitman as an American writer, an American force in Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and the archipelagoes of the sea.

Sixth, as to influence in America. No other American book has so persistent a crowd of friends, advocates and sponsors as that which from decade to decade carries on the ballyhoo for "Leaves of Grass"; in Chicago, as an instance, Walt Whitman is the only dead or living American author whose memory is kept by an informal organization that memorializes its hero with an annual dinner.

Seventh, as to Americanism. "Leaves of Grass" is the most wildly keyed solemn oath that America means something and is going somewhere that has ever been written; it is America's most classic advertisement of itself as having purpose, destiny, manners and beaconfires.

Therefore--because of the foregoing seven itemized points--and because there are further points into which the annals might be lengthened--and because still furthermore there are great and mystic points of contact that cannot be captured in itemized information--therefore "Leaves of Grass" is a book to be owned, kept, loaned, fought over, and read till it is dog-eared and dirty all over.²⁴⁰

This is indeed high praise. Undoubtedly Sandburg knew Whitman thoroughly; otherwise such compact criticism could not come from his pen. But that laudation, seemingly insufficient, was extended to:

Walt Whitman is the only established epic poet of America. He is the single American figure that both American and European artists and critics most often put in a class or throw into a category with Shakespeare, Dante, Homer. He is the one American writer that Emerson, Burroughs, John Muir, Edward Carpenter, and similar observers enter in their lists as having a size in history and an importance of utterance that places him with Socrates, Confucious, Lao Tse, and the silver-gray men of the half-worlds who left the Bhagavad Gita and writings known most often as sacred.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ Whitman, Poems, pp.iii-v.

²⁴¹ Ibid., p.vi.

Of particular poems by Whitman, Sandburg considers "Song of the Open Road" the best single characteristic and authentic one, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" the most majestic threnody to death in the English language, and "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" the most haunting.²⁴² He further asserts that in Leaves of Grass occur masterpieces of the art of poetry, which may very favorably be compared with the verse of foreign lands.²⁴³

Was Whitman the projector of Sandburg? Let us examine and compare the works of these two poets before a decision is offered.

III

A Comparison of the Writings of Sandburg and Whitman

In the year 1904 a small pamphlet entitled In Reckless Ecstasy was printed by the Asgrad Press in Galesburg, Ohio, under the sponsorship of Philip Green Wright, an instructor of English at Lombard College. This small paper-backed affair constituted the first volume of verse produced by Carl Sandburg. Included in the edition was a portrait of its author by Wright,

²⁴² Whitman, Poems, p.viii.

²⁴³ See ibid., p.ix.

his instructor, whose most significant remark read: "He reads everything: Boccaccio, Walt Whitman, Emerson, Tolstoi, and enters with appreciation and sympathetic enthusiasm into all that he reads."²⁴⁴ During his middle twenties, then, the formative period of youth, Sandburg was absorbing Whitman-- and Emerson, too, whom the latter so much admired.

In order to determine the influence which Whitman may have had on Sandburg as a mature poet, this section will be divided into four parts: democracy, religion, sex, and verse technique. The parallels presented in this chapter indicate certain resemblances between the two poets, but it must be remembered that influences of any kind cannot be proved. Some of the comparisons drawn may seem somewhat inappropriate, but they are included because of the interest which they have to the student of American literature.

A. Democracy

Whitman's Leaves of Grass glorifies democracy in all its numerous phases. Here is celebrated the equality of men and women, the divinity of the masses, and the hope of universal, as well as national, brotherhood. Sandburg, with volumes such

²⁴⁴Hansen, Portraits, p.37.

as Chicago Poems (1916), Smoke and Steel (1921), and Corn-huskers (1918), particularizes these theories and writes of definite sections or people in the United States. / Whitman had written that "the greatest poet brings the spirit of any or all events and passions and scenes and persons some more and some less to bear on your individual character as you hear or read";²⁴⁵ Sandburg attempts to do just that.

In Whitman's "O Magnet-South" and in Sandburg's "prairie" these poets, in endeavoring to follow their theories, fall somewhat short in sustained effect. Proper names, lengthy sentences, and catalogues characterize their style. The purposes of the two poets were identical: Whitman wrote of the South because of the Civil War; Sandburg wrote of the West because of its development and exploitation during this period. Occasional similarity in thought is observable. Whitman had written:

O dear to me my birth-things--all
moving things and the trees
where I was born--the grains,
plants, rivers,²⁴⁶

and Sandburg echoes the thought in this way:

²⁴⁵ Whitman, Leaves, p.495.

²⁴⁶ Whitman, Leaves, p.393, from "O Magnet-South."

I was born on the prairie and the
milk of its wheat, the red of
its clover, the eyes of its
women, gave me a song and a
slogan.²⁴⁷

Whitman, however, though his poem is sentimental, in the
lines

A Kentucky corn-field, the tall,
graceful, long-leav'd corn,
slender, flapping, bright
green, with tassels, with
beautiful ears each well-
sheath'd in its husk,²⁴⁸

surpasses Sandburg who writes:

On the left- and right-hand side
of the road,
Marching corn--
I saw it knee high weeks ago--now
it is head high--tassels of red
silk creep at the ends of the
ears.²⁴⁹

Comparatively little of Sandburg's poetry, however, is
written in celebration of the beauty and grandeur of America,
for, bitterly resenting the repression of the poor by the rich,

²⁴⁷ Sandburg, Cornhuskers, p.3, from "Prairie."

²⁴⁸ Whitman, Leaves, p.394.

²⁴⁹ Sandburg, Cornhuskers, p.8.

he lashes out against injustice in such poems as "Smoke and Steel" from the book of that title, "Legends" and "Cartoon" from Cornhuskers, and the title poem of Good Morning, America. Whitman, too, recognized the faults of democracy and warned his readers against them in Democratic Vistas,²⁵⁰ but this displeasure seldom appears in his poetry which retains a buoyant optimism throughout. Salvation, he believed, lay in the hands of the working class--the mob. His two poems, "Song of the Broad-Axe" and "Song of the Exposition,"²⁵¹ celebrate the laborer and attempt "to teach the average man the glory of his daily walk and trade."²⁵² Sandburg's "I Am the People, the Mob" imparts the same philosophy. It reads:

I am the people--the mob--the
crowd--the mass.
Do you know that all the great
work of the world is done
through me?
I am the workingman, the inventor,
the maker of the world's food
and clothes.
I am the audience that witnesses
history. The Napoleons come from
me and the Lincolns. They die,
And then I send forth more Na-
poleons and Lincolns.
I am the seed ground. I am a
prairie that will stand for much

²⁵⁰See pages 45-47 of this thesis concerning the attitude of Whitman toward the democratic principles of his era.

²⁵¹Whitman, Leaves, pp.156-174.

²⁵²Whitman, Leaves, p.171, from "Song of the Exposition."

plowing. Terrible storms pass over me. I forget. The best of me is sucked out and wasted. I forget. Everything but Death comes to me and makes me work and give up what I have. And I forget.

Sometimes I growl, shake myself and spatter a few red drops for history to remember. Then--I forget.

When I, the People, learn to remember, when I, the People, use the lessons of yesterday and no longer forget who robbed me last year, who played me for a fool--then there will be no speaker in all the world say the name: "The People," with any flick of a sneer in his voice or any far-off smile of derision.

The mob--the crowd--the mass--will arrive then.²⁵³

Whitman, in one of his occasional moments of poetic bitterness, penned these lines:

Let there be no suggestion above
the suggestion of drudgery!
Let none be pointed toward his
destination! (Say! do you
know your destination?)²⁵⁴

which quite possibly may have been the germ for Sandburg's little poem "Omaha":

²⁵³Sandburg, Chicago, p.172.

²⁵⁴Whitman, Leaves, p.470, from "Respondez!"

Red barns and red heifers spot the
green grass circles around Omaha--
the farmers haul tanks of cream
and wagon loads of cheese.

Shale hogbacks across the river
at Council Bluffs--and shanties
hang by an eyelash to the hill
slants back around Omaha.

A span of steel ties up the kin
of Iowa and Nebraska across the
yellow, big-roofed Missouri River.

Omaha, the roughneck, feeds
armies,
Eats and swears from a dirty face.
Omaha works to get the world a
breakfast.²⁵⁵

Steeped in irony, the graphic pictures of this short poem convey to us in subtle fashion the drudgery of the farmers and workers in the vicinity of this city, in a manner greatly superior to Whitman, it is true.

Sandburg has also written this graphic line from "Masses":

And then one day I got a true look
at the Poor, millions of the Poor,
patient and toiling; more patient
than crags, tides, and stars; in-
numerable, patient as the darkness
of night--and all broken, humble
ruins of nations.²⁵⁶

His "Mill-Doors" breathes the atmosphere of hopelessness for

²⁵⁵Carl Sandburg, Smoke and Steel, New York, 1921, p.26.

²⁵⁶Sandburg, Chicago, p.6.

the lot of the laborer:

You never come back.
 I say good-by when I see you going
 in the doors,
 The hopeless open doors that call
 and wait
 And take you then for--how many
 cents a day?
 How many cents for the sleepy eyes
 and fingers?

I say good-by because I know they
 tap your wrists,
 In the dark, in the silence, day
 by day,
 And all the blood of you drop by drop,
 And you are old before you are young.
 You never come back.²⁵⁷

The poem, "They Will Say," however, is a bitter seathing attack upon the evils of the city:

Of my city the worst that men will
 ever say is this:
 You took little children away from
 the sun and the dew,
 And the glimmers that played in the
 grass under the great sky,
 And the reckless rain; you put them
 between walls
 To work, broken and smothered, for
 bread and wages,
 To eat dust in their throats and
 die empty-hearted
 For a little handful of pay on a
 few Saturday nights.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ Sandburg, Chicago, p.10.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p.9.

Whitman's poem, "I Sit and Look Out," expresses a quieter recognition of these evils:

I sit and look out upon all the
 sorrows of the world, and upon
 all oppression and shame,
 I hear secret convulsive sobs from
 young men at anguish with them-
 selves, remorseful after deeds
 done,
 I see in low life the mother mis-
 treated by her children, dying,
 neglected, gaunt, desperate.
 I see the wife misused by her hus-
 band, I see the treacherous se-
 ducer of young women,
 I mark the ranklings of jealousy
 and unrequited love attempted to
 be hid, I see these sights on
 the earth,
 I see the workings of battle, pes-
 tilence, tyranny, I see martyrs
 and prisoners,
 I observe a famine at sea, I ob-
 serve the sailors casting lots
 who shall be kill'd to preserve
 the lives of the rest,
 I observe the slights and degradations
 cast by arrogant persons upon
 laborers, the poor, and upon ne-
 groes, and the like;
 All these--all the meanness and
 agony without end I sitting look
 out upon,
 See, hear, and am silent. ²⁵⁹

To turn from America as an industrial and agricultural nation, the student finds these two poets intensely interested in war. Whitman, though not an active soldier, acted as

²⁵⁹ Whitman, Leaves, p.232.

unofficial nurse in the hospitals and army camps. His experiences and reactions may be found in Leaves of Grass, particularly in the section known as "Drum-Taps." Sandburg, too, wrote poems concerning the World War, although he did not go abroad. He did, however, serve in Porto Rico during the Spanish-American war so that he too knew the horrors of war. Perhaps the most famous of the latter's war poems is "Grass," the fundamental roots of which undoubtedly grew out of Whitman, whose repetition of such phrases as "good grass," "the good clean grass," "good green grass," and "curling grass" has been marked by many of his readers.

Sandburg's poem reads:

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz
and Waterloo.
Shovel them under and let me work--
I am the grass; I cover all.

And pile them high at Gettysburg
And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun.
Shovel them under and let me work.
Two years, ten years, and passengers
ask the conductor:
What place is this?
Where are we now?

I am the grass.
Let me work.²⁶⁰

That Whitman was the originator of such an attitude is evident

²⁶⁰Sandburg, Cornhuskers, p.126.

from the passages which follow. In "Song of Myself" is found his most beautiful expression of the work of the grass:

And now it seems to me the beautiful
uncut hair of graves.

Tenderly will I use you curling
grass,
It may be you transpire from the
breasts of young men,
It may be if I had known them I
would have loved them,
It may be you are from old people,
or from offspring taken soon
out of their mothers' laps,
And here you are the mothers' laps.

This grass is very dark to be from
the white heads of old mothers,
Darker than the colorless beards
of old men,
Dark to come from under the faint
red roofs of mouths.²⁶¹

Toward the end of his life he published the poem "By Broad
Potomac's Shore," which closed with these lines:

Give me of you O spring, before I
close, to put between its pages!
O forenoon purple of the hills, be-
fore I close, of you!
O deathless grass, of you!²⁶²

✓ Parades witnessed by these two poets in Boston and Wash-
ington, D. C. inspired the satirical verses of Whitman's "A

²⁶¹ Whitman, Leaves, p.28.

²⁶² Ibid., p.400.

Boston Ballad" and Sandburg's "And So To-day." That Sandburg echoed the unusual figure of his predecessor seems quite likely when the two poems are examined. Whitman in 1854 had written:

Why this is indeed a show--it has
 called the dead out of the earth!
 The old graveyards of the hills
 have hurried to see!
 Phantoms! phantoms countless by
 flank and rear!
 Cock'd hats of nothy mould--crutches
 made of mist!
 Arms in slings--old men leaning on
 young men's shoulders.

What troubles you Yankee phantoms?
 what is all this chattering of
 bare gums?
 Does the ague convulse your limbs?
 do you mistake your crutches
 for firelocks and level them?²⁶³

Sandburg, in describing the magnificent procession to the tomb of the unknown soldier, penned these lines:

Skeleton men and boys riding skeleton
 horses,
 the rib bones shine, the rib bones curve,
 shine with savage, elegant curves--
 a jawbone runs with a long white slant,
 a skull dome runs with a long white arch,
 bone triangles click and rattle,
 elbows, ankles, white line slants--
 shining in the sun, past the White House,
 past the Treasury Building, Army and
 Navy Buildings,
 on to the mystic white Capitol Dome--

²⁶³ Whitman, Leaves, p.225.

so they go down Pennsylvania Avenue
 to-day,
 skeleton men and boys riding
 skeleton horses,
 stems of roses in their teeth,
 rose dark leaves at their white jaw
 slants--
 and a horse laugh question nickers
 and whinnies,
 moans with a whistle out of horse
 head teeth;
 why? who? where?²⁶⁴

That both poets bitterly opposed war is obvious upon consideration of their war poetry, particularly "Drum-Taps" by Whitman and "War Poems" by Sandburg.²⁶⁵ Their portrayal of the horrors of war, brutal as it may seem, merits admiration.

The assassination of Abraham Lincoln following the Civil War seemed to Whitman a great tragedy and the section, "Memories of President Lincoln,"²⁶⁶ contains two of his finest poems, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" and "O Captain! My Captain!" Sandburg, too, has numerous references to Lincoln in his own poetry. A particularly beautiful line from "Potomac River Mist" reads:

The path of a night fog swept up
 the river to the Lincoln Memorial
 when I saw it again and

²⁶⁴ Carl Sandburg, Slabs of the Sunburnt West, New York [1922], pp.20-21.

²⁶⁵ These sections are found in Whitman's Leaves, pp.237-299, and in Sandburg's Chicago, pp.85-96.

²⁶⁶ Whitman, Leaves, pp.276-285.

alone at a winter's end, the
marble in the mist white as a
blond woman's arm.²⁶⁷

His short poem, "Fire-Logs," concerns the mother of Lincoln,²⁶⁸
and his "Knucks" is an ironical picture of a store in Springfield, Illinois, the opening lines of which read:

In Abraham Lincoln's city,
Where they remember his lawyer's
shingle,
The place where they brought him
Wrapped in battle flags,
Wrapped in the smoke of memories
From Tallahassee to the Yukon,
The place now where the shaft of
his tomb
Points white against the blue
prairie dome,
In Abraham Lincoln's city . . .
I saw knucks
In the window of Mister Fischman's
second-hand store
On Second Street.²⁶⁹

Both poets desired and prophesied international understanding. Whitman's short poem, "This Moment Yearning and Thoughtful," expresses keen desire for universal brotherhood:

This moment yearning and thoughtful
sitting alone,

²⁶⁷ Sandburg, Smoke, p.175.

²⁶⁸ Sandburg, Cornhuskers, p.46.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., p.88. Knucks are "brass knuckles."

It seems to me there are other men
in other lands yearning and
thoughtful,

It seems to me I can look over and
behold them in Germany, Italy,
France, Spain,

Or far, far away, in China, or in
Russia or Japan, talking other
dialects,

And it seems to me if I could know
those men I should become at-
tached to them as I do to men in
my own lands,

O I know we should be brethren and
lovers,

I know I should be happy with them.²⁷⁰

His long poem, "Passage to India," although allegorical, prophesies intellectual, as well as physical, union of the East and West.²⁷¹

Sandburg's poem, "The Four Brothers," also prophesies future peaceful association of all nations. Excerpts from this poem read:

Look! It is four brothers in joined
hands together.

The people of bleeding France,

The people of Britain, these,

people of America--

These are the four brothers, these
are the four republics.²⁷²

²⁷⁰Whitman, Leaves, p.107.

²⁷¹Ibid., pp.343-351. The allegorical meaning: man's long search for an all-water passage to India typifies the soul's long and baffled search for truth and for God.

²⁷²Sandburg, Cornhuskers, p.143.

Good-night is the word, good-night
 to the kings, to the czars,
 Good-night to the kaiser.
 The breakdown and the fade-away begins.
 The shadow of a great broom, ready to
 sweep out the trash, is here.²⁷³

Out of the wild finger-writing north
 and south, east and west, over
 the blood-crossed, blood-dusty
 ball of earth,
 Out of it all a God who knows is
 sweeping clean,
 Out of it all a God who sees and
 pierces through, is breaking and
 cleaning out an old thousand years,
 is making ready for a new thousand
 years.
 The four brothers shall be five and
 more.

Under the chimneys of the winter
 time the children of the world
 shall sing new songs.
 Among the rocking restless cradles
 the mothers of the world shall
 sing new sleepy-time songs.²⁷⁴

A study of this doctrine of brotherhood leads the reader to discover that Whitman sincerely believed in his ability to assume the identities of other men and women;²⁷⁵ Sandburg follows his predecessor in this creed only occasionally. The latter's poem, "Old Times," undoubtedly has its origin in Whitman:

²⁷³Sandburg, Cornhuskers, p.144.

²⁷⁴Ibid., p.147.

²⁷⁵See the quotation from Whitman's Leaves in this thesis, pp.55-56.

I am an ancient reluctant conscript.

On the soup wagons of Xerxes I was
a cleaner of pans.

On the march of Miltiades' phalanx
I had a haft and head;
I had a bristling gleaming spear-
handle.

Red-headed Caesar picked me for a
teamster.
He said, "Go to work, you Tuscan
bastard,
Rome calls for a man who can drive
horses."

The units of conquest led by Charles
the Twelfth,
The whirling whimsical Napoleonic
columns:
They saw me one of the horseshoers.

Lincoln said, "Get into the game;
your nation takes you."
And I drove a wagon and team and I
had my arm shot off
At Spottsylvania Court House.

I am an ancient reluctant conscript.²⁷⁶

But Whitman too had written:

I am an old artillerist, I tell of
my fort's bombardment,
I am there again.

Again the long roll of the drummers,
Again the attacking cannon, mortars,
Again to my listening wars the cannon
responsive.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁶Sandburg, Cornhuskers, p.129.

²⁷⁷Whitman, Leaves, p.57, from "Song of Myself."

Sandburg assumes the identity of a married woman in his short poem "Two Strangers Breakfast":

The law says you and I belong to
each other, George.
The law says you are mine and I am
yours, George.
And there are a million miles of
white snowstorms, a million fur-
naces of hell,
Between the chair where you sit and
the chair where I sit.
The law says two strangers shall eat
breakfast together after nights
on the horn of an Arctic moon.²⁷⁸

Yet years before Whitman had written of himself as being dif-
ferent women in this manner:

It is my face yellow and wrinkled
instead of the old woman's,
I sit low in a straw-bottom chair
and carefully darn my grandson's
stockings.

It is I too, the sleepless widow
looking out on the winter mid-
night,
I see the sparkles of starshine
on the icy and pallid earth.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁸Sandburg, Smoke, p.205.

²⁷⁹Whitman, Leaves, p.257.

B. Religion

Whitman believed in the Divinity and in the immortality of man. To him, the body, as well as the soul, was sacred and death was hailed by this poet as "lovely" and "welcome." He attempted to place God and Christ on an equal basis with man and at times identified himself with the Savior. His use of sexual imagery to express certain religious mystical experiences has disturbed many of his readers;²⁸⁰ nevertheless, Whitman's God is all-powerful, human, and understanding.

Sandburg's references to God and Christ are numerous, but nowhere in his poetry does he attempt to assume the Sacred Identity. He does, however, endeavor to make the Divinity comprehensible and living to the common people. He writes:

I have looked over the earth and
seen the swarming of different
people to a different God--
White men with prayers to a white
God, black men with prayers to
a black God, yellow-faces before
altars to a yellow-face God--
Amid burning fires they have pic-
tured God with a naked skin; amid
frozen rocks they have pictured
God clothed and shaggy as a
polar bear--
I have met stubs of men broken in
the pain and mutilation of war
saying God is forgetful and too
far off, too far away--

²⁸⁰See Whitman, Leaves, p.27, Section 5; p.32, Section 11; p.72, Section 48.

I have met people saying they talk
 with God face to face; they tell
 God, hello God and how are you
 God; they get familiar with God
 and hold intimate conversations--
 Yet I have met other people saying
 they are afraid to see God face
 to face for they would ask questions
 even as God might ask them questions.²⁸¹

Previously Whitman had written:

I see the place of the idea of the
 Deity incarnated by avatars in
 human forms,
 I see the spots of the successions
 of priests on the earth, oracles,
 sacrifices, brahmins, sabians,
 llamas, monks, maftis, exhorters,
 I see where the druids walk'd the
 groves of Mona, I see the mistle-
 toe and vervain,
 I see the temples of the deaths of
 the bodies of Gods, I see the old
 signifiers.
 I see Christ eating the bread of
 his last supper in the midst of
 youths and old persons,...²⁸²

The numerous references to Christ found in the poetry of Sandburg are astonishing in one called "brutal." His poem, "Loin Cloth," although not finely executed, has an excellent mood;

²⁸¹ Carl Sandburg, Good Morning, America, New York, 1928, p.6.

²⁸² Whitman, Leaves, p.118. For Whitman's doctrine of self-identification with Christ see pp.68-69.

Body of Jesus taken down from the
 cross
 Carved in ivory by a lover of Christ,
 It is a child's handful you are here,
 The breadth of a man's finger,
 And this ivory loin cloth
 Speaks an interspersal in the day's
 work,
 The carver's prayer and whim
 And Christ-love.²⁸³

In another poem written, according to his own notation, on Christmas Day 1917, Sandburg has this line: "Jesus in an Illinois barn early this morning, the baby Jesus...in flannels..."²⁸⁴ In still another he asks:

Did I see a crucifix in your eyes
 and nails and Roman soldiers
 and a dusk Golgotha?²⁸⁵

He writes of the "Christ face," of "the hands of God washing something, feet of God walking somewhere,"²⁸⁶ and of the love Jesus had for "the sunsets on Galilee."²⁸⁷

²⁸³Sandburg, Cornhuskers, p.101.

²⁸⁴Sandburg, Smoke, p.239. The title of the poem is "Rusty Crimson."

²⁸⁵Ibid., p.42, from "Crimson Changes People."

²⁸⁶Ibid., pp.68 and 249. The titles of the poems are "Brass Keys" and "Night's Nothing Again," respectively.

²⁸⁷Sandburg, America, p.171, from "Epistle."

Whitman, in 1865, had written:

Young man I think I know you--I
 think this face is the face of the
 Christ himself,
 Dead and divine and brother of all,
 and here again he lies.²⁸⁸

throughout his poetry expressions indicative of intimacy with God occur; "the hand of God is the promise of my own," "the spirit of God is the brother of my own," "the beautiful gentle God," "the great Camerado," all appearing in "Song of Myself."²⁸⁹

To Sandburg, God is both healer and avenger. He suggests

Let us look on
 And listen in
 On God's great workshop
 Of stars...and eggs...²⁹⁰

in parallelism with Whitman who wrote "that all things of the universe are perfect miracles, each as profound as any."²⁹¹

In attempting a description of approaching darkness in a valley, Sandburg declares:

²⁸⁸Whitman, Leaves, p.259, from "A Sight in Camp in the Day-break Gray and DIm."

²⁸⁹Ibid., pp.27,54,70, respectively.

²⁹⁰Sandburg, America, p.27, a selection from the title poem.

²⁹¹Whitman, Leaves, p.19, from "Starting from Paumanok."

I was there, I saw that hour, I
 know God had grand intentions
 about it.²⁹²

Whitman before him had penned these lines:

Each is not for its own sake,
 I say the whole earth and all the
 stars in the sky are for re-
 ligion's sake.²⁹³

Sandburg's unsuccessful endeavor to describe the Grand Canyon in "Many Hats" caused him to wonder and discuss God's connection with this natural phenomenon.²⁹⁴ His predecessor, however, had answered the question for himself and his readers in this way:

Was somebody asking to see the soul?
 See, your own shape and countenance,
 persons, substances, beasts, the
 trees, the running rivers, the rocks
 and sands.²⁹⁵

The World War led Sandburg to write "The Four Brothers," in which are stanzas depicting the ruthlessness of God:

²⁹² Sandburg, America, p.32, from "Moist Moon People."

²⁹³ Whitman, Leaves, p.16, from "Starting from Paumanok."

²⁹⁴ Sandburg, America, pp.242-251.

²⁹⁵ Whitman, Leaves, p.19, from "Starting from Paumanok."

God takes one year for a job.
 God takes ten years or a million.
 God knows when a doom is written.²⁹⁶

Out of the wild finger-writing north
 and south, east and west, over
 the blood-crossed, blood-dusty
 ball of earth,
 Out of it all a God who knows is
 sweeping clean
 Out of it all a God who sees and
 pierces through, is breaking
 and cleaning out an old thousand
 years, is making ready for a new
 thousand years.²⁹⁷

Nowhere in Whitman's poetry does such an attitude appear. On the contrary, he writes:

Why should I wish to see God better
 than this day?
 I see something of God each hour of
 the twenty-four, and each moment
 then,
 In the faces of men and women I see
 God, and in my own face in the glass,
 I find letters from God dropt in the
 street, and every one is sign'd by
 God's name,
 And I leave them where they are, for
 I know that wheresoe'er I go
 Others will punctually come for ever
 and ever.²⁹⁸

Indeed, Sandburg's attitude toward religion seems somewhat superficial when compared with the buoyant, yet awed, conception

²⁹⁶ Sandburg, Cornhuskers, p.145.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., p.147.

²⁹⁸ Whitman, Leaves, pp.73-74, from "Song of Myself."

of Whitman who wrote of "walking the old hills of Judaea with the beautiful gentle God by my side," of "taking myself the exact dimensions of Jehovah," and of the "universal God."²⁹⁹ He declared

I hear and behold God in every object,
yet understand God not in the least,
Nor do I understand who there can be
more wonderful than myself.³⁰⁰

Both, however, are subject to all the faith and doubt of the average person concerning immortality. Both recognize death as the ultimate end and yet, though moments of doubt do appear, they sincerely believe in eternal life. Whitman exults that he can "show that nothing can happen more beautiful than death" and asks "how can the real body ever die and be buried?"³⁰¹ Confidently he declares:

My rendezvous is appointed, it is
certain,
The Lord will be there and wait till
I come on perfect terms,
The great Camerado, the lover true
for whom I pine will be there.³⁰²

²⁹⁹ Whitman, Leaves, pp.54, 63, 392.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., p.73.

³⁰¹ Ibid., pp.18 and 19.

³⁰² Ibid., p.70.

The section entitled "Whispers of Heavenly Death" is his Leaves of Grass is the epitome of his belief in life after death,³⁰³ but none of his poems here equals the exquisite hymn to death found in "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd."³⁰⁴

Sandburg's famous poem, "Cool Tombs," expresses his feeling, like that of Whitman, that death is the bringer of peace and rest.

When Abraham Lincoln was shoveled
into the tombs, he forgot the
copperheads and the assassin
. . . in the dust, in the cool
tombs.

And Ulysses Grant lost all thought
of con men and Wall Street, cash
and collateral turned ashes . .
. . in the dust, in the cool tombs.

Pocahontas' body, lovely as a poplar,
sweet as a red haw in November or
a pawpaw in May, did she wonder?
does she remember? . . . in the
dust, in the cool tombs?

Take any streetful of people buying
clothes and groceries, cheering
a hero or throwing confetti and
blowing tin horns . . . tell me
if the lovers are losers . . .
tell me if any get more than the
lovers . . . in the dust . . .
in the cool tombs.³⁰⁵

Again he writes:

³⁰³Whitman, Leaves, pp.369-378.

³⁰⁴Ibid., pp.281-282.

³⁰⁵Sandburg, Cornhuskers, p.120.

Gather the stars if you wish it so.
 Gather the songs and keep them.
 Gather the faces of women.
 Gather for keeping years and years.
 And then . . .
 Loosen your hands, let go and say
 good-by.

Let the stars and songs go.
 Let the faces and years go.
 Loosen your hands and say good-by.³⁰⁶

Both poets, too, compare death to a sleep. Whitman writes, "The living sleep for their time, the dead sleep for their time,"³⁰⁷ and Sandburg declares that

Death is a nurse mother with big arms:
 'Twon't hurt you at all; it's your
 time now; you just need a long sleep,
 child; what have you had anyhow better
 than sleep?³⁰⁸

Uncertainties occasionally appear in the productions of these poets. Whitman, in spite of his optimism, wondered if perhaps "identity beyond the grave is beautiful fable only."³⁰⁹ and composes such a poem as "Yet, Yet De Downcast Hours," the first stanza of which reads:

³⁰⁶Sandburg, Smoke, p.123, from "Stars, Faces, Songs."

³⁰⁷Whitman, Leaves, p.37.

³⁰⁸Sandburg, Smoke, p.60.

³⁰⁹Whitman, Leaves, p.100.

Yet, yet, ye downcast hours, I
 I know ye also,
 Weights of lead, how ye clog and
 cling at my ankles,
 Earth to a chamber of mourning
 turns--I hear the o'erweening,
 mocking voice,
Matter is conquerer--matter, tri-
umphant only, continues onward.³¹⁰

Sandburg, in the Whitmanic manner, asks:

How can I taste with my tongue a
 tongueless God?
 How can I touch with my fingers a
 fingerless God?
 How can I hear with my ears an
 earless God?
 Or smell of a God gone noseless long
 ago?
 Or look on a God who never needs
 eyes for looking?³¹¹

And again he wonders "who is God and why? who am I and why?"³¹²

C. Sex

Whitman has been called indecent by his readers; Sandburg has been labeled brutal. True as these accusations may be,

³¹⁰ Whitman, Leaves, p.372.

³¹¹ Sandburg, Slabs, p.71.

³¹² Sandburg, America, p.250.

their frankness concerning sex is admirable. The bulwark of the former's poetry is built upon sex in all its relationships. The latter's verse leaves us with the impression of superficiality; the reader feels that Sandburg's heart is not deeply concerned with such matters. Both poets, however, write of sex because it is a part of our American life, but just what resemblance there is between the two writers must be determined here.

Similar thought is found in a number of their poems though the externals differ. Whitman's excellent poem, "Once I Pass'd through a Populous City," reads:

Once I pass'd through a populous city
 imprinting my brain for future
 use with its shows, architecture,
 customs, traditions,
 Yet now of all that city I remember
 only a woman I casually met there
 who detained me for love of me,
 Day by day and night by night we
 were together--all else has
 long been forgotten by me,
 I remember I say only that woman who
 passionately clung to me,
 Again we wander, we love, we separate
 again,
 Again she holds me by the hand, I
 must not go,
 I see her close beside me with silent
 lips sad and tremulous.³¹³

Sandburg wrote:

³¹³Whitman, Leaves, p.93.

"I knew a real man once," says Agatha
in the splendor of a shagbark
hickory tree.

Did a man touch his lips to Agatha?
Did a man hold her in his arms?
Did a man only look at her and
pass by?

Agatha, far past forty in a splendor
of remembrance, says, "I knew a
real man once."³¹⁴

As early as 1860 Whitman dealt frankly and openly with the prostitute, bringing harsh criticisms upon himself. In "Native Moments" he averred:

O you shunn'd persons, I at least do
not shun you,
I come forthwith in your midst, I
will be your poet,
I will be more to you than to any
of the rest.³¹⁵

Then too, in extremely modern fashion, he wrote a short poem entitled "To a Common Prostitute," for he considered her a part of American life and he felt it his duty to celebrate all phases of that life. The poem reads:

Be composed--be at ease with me--
I am Walt Whitman, liberal and
lusty as Nature,

³¹⁴Sandburg, Smoke, p.208, from "Plaster."

³¹⁵Whitman, Leaves, p.93.

Not till the sun excludes you do
 I exclude you,
 Not till the waters refuse to glisten
 for you and the leaves to rustle
 for you, do my words refuse to
 glisten and rustle for you.

My girl I appoint with you an appointment,
 and I charge you that you make
 preparation to be worthy to meet
 me,
 And I charge you that you be patient
 perfect till I come.

Till then I salute you with a sig-
 nificant look that you do not
 forget me. 316

Sandburg, too, writes of the prostitute in a similar
 fashion, although he does make her seem more human to the rea-
 der:

There is a woman on Michigan
 Boulevard keeps a parrot and
 goldfish and two white mice.

She used to keep a houseful
 of girls in kimonos and three
 pushbuttons on the front door.

Now she is alone with a parrot
 and goldfish and two white mice
 ...but these are some of her
 thoughts:

The love of a soldier on furlough
 or a sailor on shore leave
 burns with a bonfire red and
 saffron.

The love of an emigrant workman

316 Whitman, Leaves, p.324.

whose wife is a thousand miles
away burns with a blue smoke.

The love of a young man whose
sweetheart married an older man
for money burns with a sputtering
uncertain flame.

And there is a love...one in a
thousand...burns clean and is
gone leaving a white ash...

And this is the thought she never
explains to the parrot and goldfish
and two white mice.³¹⁷

Nothing could be more typically Whitman than the poem,
"Haze," by Sandburg which follows:

I don't care who you are, man;
I know a woman is looking for you
and her soul is a corn-tassel
kissing a south-west wind

I don't care who you are, man;
I know sons and daughters looking
for you
And they are gray dust working
toward star paths
And you see them from a garret
window when you laugh
At your luck and murmur, "I don't
care."

I don't care who you are, woman:
I know a man is looking for you
And his soul is a south-west wind
kissing a corn-tassel

I don't care who you are, woman:

³¹⁷Sandburg, Smoke, p.218. The title of the poem is "White
Ash."

I know sons and daughters looking
 for you
 And they are next year's wheat or
 the year after hidden in the
 dark and loam.³¹⁸

Undoubtedly, Sandburg received his inspiration for these lines from the "Children of Adam" section of Leaves of Grass.³¹⁹

Parenthood seemed sacred to Whitman, and Sandburg himself has a long poem entitled "Harsk, Harsk," in which he describes the time prior to the baby's birth and the night of birth itself.³²⁰

Love intrigued these two poets with Whitman writing these lines taken from his "The Mystic Trumpeter":

Love, that impulse of all, the
 sustenance and the pang,
 The heart of man and woman all
 for love,
 No other theme but love--knitting,
 enclosing, all-diffusing love.³²¹

But Sandburg not to be outdone by his forerunner, wonders about love's mysteries in this excerpt from "Brass Keys":

... and why does love ask nothing
 and give all? and why is love rare

³¹⁸Sandburg, Smoke, pp.229-230.

³¹⁹See Whitman, Leaves, pp.77-94.

³²⁰Sandburg, Slabs, pp.51-52.

³²¹Whitman, Leaves, p.390.

as a tailed comet shaking guesses
 out of men at telescopes ten feet
 long? why does the mystery sit with
 its chin on the lean forearm of
 women in gray eyes and women in
 hazel eyes?³²²

That both are keenly interested in this phase of life seems obvious, but the matter is much more vital to Whitman than to Sandburg.

D. Verse Technique

Whitman expressed his theory of poetic form in his "Song of the Answerer" of 1855 when he said:

All this time and at all times wait
 the words of true poems,
 The words of true poems do not merely
 please,
 The true poets are not followers of
 beauty but the august masters
 of beauty;
 The greatness of sons is the exuding
 of the greatness of mothers and
 fathers,
 The words of true poems are the
 tuft and final applause of science.

Divine instinct, breadth of vision,
 the law of reason, health, rude-
 ness of body, withdrawnness,
 Gayety, sun-tan, air-sweetness,

³²²Sandburg, Smoke, p.68.

such are some of the words of
poems.³²³

He declared too in his preface to the 1855 edition of Leaves of Grass that "the great poets are also to be known by the absence in them of tricks, and by the justification of perfect personal candor."³²⁴

In 1961 Sandburg defended his own poetic theory in a little poem "Style":

Style--go ahead talking about style.
You can tell where a man gets his
style just as you can tell
where Pavlowa got her legs or
Ty Cobb his batting eye.

Go on talking.
Only don't take my style away.
It's my face.
Maybe no good
but anyway, my face.
I talk with it, I sing with it, I
see, taste and feel with it,
I know why I want to keep it.

Kill my style
and you break Pavlowa's legs,
and you blind Ty Cobb's
batting eye.³²⁵

Direct comparison of Sandburg's five volumes with Whitman's single volume discloses amazing similarity in verse

³²³Whitman, Leaves, p.143.

³²⁴Ibid., p.501.

³²⁵Sandburg, Chicago, p.51.

technique. Reiteration, little or no rhyme, slang, epithets, catalogues characterize their work. Few "run-on" lines occur in the verse of either poet; a thought is usually compressed into one line.

Perhaps the volume containing Sandburg's most characteristic poetry, his finest and his worst, is Smoke and Steel, published in 1921. A perusal of its title poem reveals frequent employment of phrases in parallel structure as in the first three lines:

Smoke of the fields in spring is one,
Smoke of the leaves in autumn another.
Smoke of a steel-mill roof or a
battle-ship funnel,....326

Or examine the parallelisms of phrases and clauses in his poem "Night Movement--New York":

In the night, when the sea-winds
take the city in their arms,
And cool the loud streets that kept
their dust noon and afternoon;
In the night, when the sea-birds
call to the lights of the city,
The lights that cut on the skyline
their name of a city;
In the night, when the trains and
wagons start from a long way off
For the city where the people ask
bread and want letters;

Thou knowest how before I commenced
 I devoted all to come to Thee,
 Thou knowest I have in age ratified
 all those vows and strictly
 kept them,
 Thou knowest I have not once lost
 nor faith nor ecstasy in Thee,
 In shackles, prison'd, in disgrace,
 repining not,
 Accepting all from Thee, as duly
 come from Thee.³²⁹

In a few lines from his "By Blue Ontario's Shore" occurs the use of clauses in parallel structure:

I will see if I am not as majestic
 as they,
 I will see if I am not as subtle
 and real as they,
 I will see if I am to be less gen-
 erous than they,
 I will see if I have no meaning,
 while the houses and ships have
 meaning,
 I will see if the fishes and birds
 are to be enough for themselves,
 and I am not enough for myself.³³⁰

Numerous illustrations of this type of verse-writing might be selected from both writers but these selections indicate that Sandburg probably was affected, to a certain degree at least, by this unusual feature in Whitman.

Both use the long line, a characteristic less common to other poets. The longest line in Whitman appears in his

³²⁹ Whitman, Leaves, p.352.

³³⁰ Ibid., p.298.

"Salut au Monde!" and Sandburg's longest lines appear in his "Good Morning, America."³³¹

Since Sandburg and Whitman were interested in creating new or unusual effects, their disregard for rhyme is not strange. Both desired free range for their thoughts, so that any poetic restrictions would have been entirely foreign to their purpose.

Their aim as poets, to present America as they saw it, led Whitman and Sandburg to become keenly interested in words. The former in his An American Primer pleaded for a language wholly American, not English, which would employ terms used in the nation's industries and social interests.³³² Whitman once wrote, "I know my words are weapons full of danger, full of death,"³³³ and Sandburg has written an excellent little poem which he calls "Primer Lesson";

Look out how you use proud words.
When you let proud words go, it
is not easy to call them back.
They wear long boots, hard boots;
they walk off proud; they can't
hear you calling--
Look out how you use proud words.³³⁴

³³¹ See Whitman's Leaves, p.118 and Sandburg's America, pp.3-27.

³³² See Whitman's Primer.

³³³ Whitman, Leaves, p.271, from "As I Lay with My Head in Your Lap Camerado."

³³⁴ Sandburg, Slabs, p.66.

Both Whitman and Sandburg employed slang most effectively. The former uses such words as "stuck up," "old top-knot," "hankering," "fancy-man," "duds," all of which appear in "Song of Myself"; Sandburg, not to be outdone uses such terms as "hairy, hankering," "slant-head," "moniker," "galoots," all from his volume Smoke and Steel. The latter's use of slang words and phrases is too often carried to excess so that they sometimes lose their power and become dawdling.

Whitman's extensive employment of the catalogue, illustrated in his familiar "Song of Myself,"³³⁵ formed for him, however unsuccessful it may have been, a medium for the presentation of the remarkable vastness of all the aspects of our nation. Sandburg makes use of the same method and fails in a similar fashion. Wishing to differ in some respect from his predecessor who listed the animals of America,³³⁶ he catalogues the flowers.³³⁷ Each of Sandburg's volumes has a great deal of this listing to create, as did Whitman, the illusion of grandeur and extensiveness.

Sandburg's poems must be divided necessarily into two types: the lyric and the realistic. It is only in the latter that few "run-on" lines occur. Each line comprises a complete sentence; the thought is not carried over. This style was

³³⁵Whitman, Leaves, pp.24-76.

³³⁶See ibid., p.53.

³³⁷See Sandburg's America, pp.8-9.

developed to its final degree by Whitman in his Leaves of Grass, from which Sandburg probably received his inspiration. Examination of the realistic poems in the five volumes of poetry published by Sandburg discloses ample illustrations for this point. Striking examples of poems following this style are the title poems "Smoke and Steel" and "Good Morning, America."

IV

Conclusion

The evidence presented in this chapter, Part I, attempts to show that American critics have directly and indirectly compared and contrasted Whitman and Sandburg from 1918 to 1933, during which time their reviews appeared. Their opinions varied, of course, from the assertion by Louis Untermeyer that Sandburg showed marked resemblance to Whitman both in style and content to Harry Hansen's refusal to see very much connection between the two poets. The majority, fifteen of the nineteen critics considered, however, expressed firm belief that Sandburg had his roots in Whitman.

The four critics who made no connection between these two poets included Harry Hansen, Mark and Carl Van Doren, Harriet Monroe, T. K. Whipple, and Alfred Kreyenborg. Hansen, although admitting that Sandburg used Whitmanic catalogues, declared

that this poet was not even derivative of his predecessor in spite of his early reading of Whitman. Even though the Van Doren brothers made no mention of Whitman's name, they gave Sandburg certain characteristics--love of humanity, range of sympathies, use of common words--which have been generally recognized to be Whitman's. Harriet Monroe's discussion of Sandburg's art included no direct comparison with Whitman, but her references to the lyrics, refrains, and language of the contemporary poet were applicable to Whitman. T. K. Whipple, one of the foremost modern critics, severely criticized Sandburg whose poetry seemed to him seldom finished, and averred that since this poet was a skeptic he could not be a mystic as Whitman was.

None of these critics, however, took particular passages from the two poets in order to determine exact parallelisms, if such existed. Some quoted excerpts from Sandburg which were in the general Whitmanic vein, but quotations from Whitman were not included.

That Sandburg was familiar with Whitman during the formative years of his life has been definitely proved by his former instructor, Philip Green Wright, who declared that the poet absorbed everything he read. Sandburg's own introduction to the volume of Whitman's poem published by the Modern Library indicates complete familiarity with Leaves of Grass, in which he found masterpieces of poetry. High praise this poet gave the verse, proclaiming Whitman the single American figure who

might be placed along side Shakespeare, Dante, and Homer.

Direct comparison of the poetry of Whitman and Sandburg discloses parallels definitely indicating an undisputable likeness in their style and content. Both poets portrayed America as an agricultural and industrial nation. Whitman discusses the glaring faults of democracy in his prose volume, Democratic Vistas and Other Papers, but very little of this disapproval appears in his poetry. Sandburg's verse, on the other hand, abounds with bitter invectives against the injustices dealt out by the rich upon the poor. Both poets, however, believe that America's salvation lies in its working class, so that they celebrate, in a high fashion, the ordinary laborer.

The subject of war furnished these poets with material for many of their poems. Both had had direct contact with the horrors of warfare and they do not hesitate to describe its seamer side. Their satirical poems, "A Boston Ballad" and "And So To-day," contain arresting descriptions of skeleton armies called from their graves by modern military pageantry. Bitterly opposed to war, the "Drum-Taps" of Whitman and the "War Poems" of Sandburg stand as monuments of warning to Americans of to-day.

Both poets look upon Abraham Lincoln as a great man whose life was tragically shortened by an assassin's bullet, for which reason Whitman devoted an entire section in his Leaves of Grass to poems concerning him and Sandburg has made numerous references to him in his own verse and prose.

International brotherhood is the dream of both Whitman and Sandburg, as evidenced in their longer poems, "Passage to India" and "The Four Brothers."

Closely allied to this doctrine is Whitman's passionate belief in his ability to assume the identities of other persons, as manifested in "Song of Myself." Sandburg only occasionally adopts this tactic, and it is indeed obvious to the reader that this assumption is not a vital part of his verse, as in Whitman's case.

Perhaps the greatest similarity between these two versifiers lies in their attitude toward religion. Their greatest ambition is to make God and Christ understandable and human to the common people. Sandburg's God, however, as exemplified in "The Four Brothers," is often crude and ruthless but nowhere is Whitman's God anything but kind and gentle. Whitman's assumption of the Sacred identity, however, never appears in Sandburg's verse. Nature to both is the supreme manifestation of true religion. Death holds no terror for either of them, but brings instead sleep, peace, and rest.

Like everyone else, these poets experience moments of doubt, but their natural optimism never permits lengthy periods of pessimism concerning religion.

Whitman and Sandburg, sincerely concerned with all phases of life, do not hesitate in frank, open treatment of sex. The lowest type of person is worthy of their pen so that the prostitute receives her consideration. Parenthood is celebrated

by them, although Sandburg's verse has none of the graphic descriptions found in the "Children of Adam" section of Leaves of Grass. Careful examination indicates, however, that sex is much more a vital part of Whitman's poetry than it is of Sandburg's.

To turn now from content to style, marked similarities between these poets become apparent. Both are forced to defend their style against critics. Their verse technique leaves no doubt in the reader's mind concerning the source of Sandburg's verse. Parallel structure of words, phrases, and clauses, reiteration, no rhyme, slang, catalogues, no "run-on" lines characterize their work.

Here has been presented the evidence which may be examined to determine the relationship of Sandburg with Whitman. That the former was deeply impressed by his reading of the good gray poet seems evident, and it is apparent that Sandburg's general philosophy of life, as well as his form, is akin to that of Whitman. During the process of the investigation made by the writer of this thesis, however, it became more and more apparent that Sandburg developed his own individual technique of content and style far beyond that of his predecessor.

Appendix and Bibliography

Appendix A

Charles Scribner's Sons
Publishers
597 Fifth Avenue, New York

October 17, 1935

Dear Miss Haught:

In reply to your inquiry, I am writing to say that I, in common with most critics and historians of literature, regard Walt Whitman as a very important factor in American literature, almost the first truly American figure in that literature and one of its most representative voices. Roughly speaking, I should say that the three most important, as well as most American, individuals produced by this country are Emerson, Lincoln and Whitman.

I think the influence of Whitman upon contemporary poetry has been very great, more especially in relation to substance and point of view, perhaps, than to manner and style. I have never written any large amount of vers libre but I think that a great deal of my poetry has its spiritual roots in Whitman, though the form which it takes is so different.

I'm glad to give you permission to include my reply in your thesis, and I thank you for your interest.

Yours very truly,

John Hall Wheelock (signed)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Books

- Anderson, Sherwood. Mid-American Chants. New York and London, 1918.
- The Modern Writer. San Francisco [1925].
- Sherwood Anderson's Notebook. New York, 1926.
- A Story Teller's Story. New York, 1924.
- The Triumph of the Egg. New York, 1921.
- Beach, Joseph Warren. The Outlook for American Prose. Chicago [1926].
- Boynton, Percy H. A History of American Literature. New York [1919].
- More Contemporary Americans. Chicago [1927].
- Burroughs, John. Whitman. New York, 1901.
- Cappon, James. Bliss Carman. New York and Montreal, 1930.
- Chase, Cleveland B. Sherwood Anderson. New York, 1927.
- Cairns, William B. A History of American Literature. New York, 1930. Revised edition.
- Ellis, Havelock. The New Spirit. New York [1926].
- Fagin, N. Bryllion. The Phenomenon of Sherwood Anderson. Baltimore, 1927.
- Foerster, Norman. American Poetry and Prose: a Book of Readings, 1607-1916. New York [1925].
- Hansen, Harry. Midwest Portraits: a Book of Memoirs and Friendships. New York [1923].
- Hartwick, Harry. The Foreground of American Fiction. New York [1934].
- Hicks, Granville. The Great Tradition: an Interpretation of American Literature since the Civil War. New York, 1933.

- Kreymborg, Alfred. Our Singing Strength. New York, 1929.
- Lowell, Amy. Poetry and Poets. New York, 1930.
- Macy, John. American Writers on American Literature. New York [1931].
- Manly, J. M. The Poems and Plays of William Vaughn Moody, vol. I. New York, 1912.
- Mason, Daniel Gregory. Some Letters of William Vaughn Moody. New York, 1913.
- Michaud, Régis. The American Novel To-day: a Social and Psychological Study. Boston, 1928.
- Monroe, Harriet. Poets and Their Art. New York, 1926.
- Moody, William Vaughn. Poems. Boston and New York, 1902.
- Parrington, Vernon Louis. The Beginnings of Critical Realism in America: 1860-1920. New York, 1930.
- Pattee, Fred Lewis. A History of American Literature since 1870. New York, 1915.
- , The New American Literature: 1890-1930. New York and London [1930].
- Perry, Bliss. Walt Whitman; His Life and Work. Boston and New York, 1906.
- Sandburg, Carl. Chicago Poems. New York, 1916.
- , Cornhuskers. New York, 1918.
- , Good Morning, America. New York, 1928.
- , Slabs of the Sunburnt West. New York [1922].
- , Smoke and Steel. New York, 1921.
- Sherman, Stuart P. Critical Woodcuts. New York, 1926.
- Stidger, William L. Edwin Markham. New York [1933].
- Untermeyer, Louis. American Poetry since 1900. New York, 1923.
- , Modern American Poetry: a Critical Anthology. New York [1925]. Third revised edition.

- Untermeyer, Louis. The New Era in American Poetry. New York, 1919.
- Van Doren, Carl and Mark. American and British Literature since 1890. New York and London [1925].
- Ward, A. C. American Literature: 1880-1930. London [1932].
- Whipple, T. K. Spokesmen; Modern Writers and American Life. New York and London, 1928.
- Whitman, Walt. An American Primer. Boston, 1904.
- Democratic Vistas and Other Papers. London and Toronto, 1888.
- Leaves of Grass. New York [1933]. Selected and edited by Charles Cullen.
- Leaves of Grass. New York, 1931. Inclusive edition edited by Emory Holloway.
- Poems. New York, n.d. The Modern Library Series.
- Wood, Clement. Poets of America. New York [1925].

II. Magazines

- Allen, Gay W. "Biblical Analogies for Walt Whitman's Prosody," in Revue Anglo-Américaine, x (1933), 490-507.
- Anderson, Sherwood. "America on a Cultural Jag," in The Saturday Review of Literature, iv (1927), 364-365.
- "Elizabethton, Tennessee," in The Nation, cxxviii (1929), 526-527.
- "A Man's Mind," in The New Republic, lxiii (1930), 22-23.
- Benjamin, Paul L. "A Poet of the Common-Place," in The Survey, xlv (1920), 12-13.
- Boynton, H. W. "All over the Lot," in The Bookman, xlix (1929), 728-734.

- Boynton, Percy H. "American Authors of To-day," in The English Journal, xi (1922), 383-391.
- "The Voice of Chicago: Edgar Lee Masters and Carl Sandburg," in The English Journal, xi (1922), 610-620.
- Bromfield, Louis. "Introspection and Retrospection," in The Bookman, lx (1924), 492-494.
- Collins, Joseph. "The Doctor Looks at Biography," in The Bookman, lxi (1925), 22-28.
- Evans, Nancy. "Edwin Arlington Robinson," in The Bookman, lxxv (1932), 675-681.
- Gregory, Alyse. "Sherwood Anderson," in The Dial, lxxii (1923), 243-246.
- Gregory, Horace. "Our Writers and the Democratic Myth," in The Bookman, lxxv (1932), 377-382.
- Holcomb, Esther Lolita. "Whitman and Sandburg," in The English Journal, xvii (1928), 549-555.
- Holloway, Emory. "Whitman as a Critic of America," in Studies in Philology, xx (1923), 345-369.
- Kellogg, Arthur. "Telling Tales on Life," in The Survey, llii (1924), 288-289.
- Kreymborg, Alfred. "A Poet and His Audience," in The New Republic, xxxvii (1923), 7-8.
- Krutch, Joseph Wood. "Vagabonds," in The Nation, cxxi (1925), 626-627.
- Lewis, Charlton M. "William Vaughn Moody," in The Yale Review, ii (1923), 688-703.
- L. L. [Ludwig Lewisohn]. "Novelist and Prophet," in The Nation, cxvi (1923), 368.
- Lovett, Robert Morss. "Mr. Sherwood Anderson's America," in The Dial, lxx (1921), 77-79.
- "Sherwood Anderson," in The English Journal, xlii (1924), 531-539.
- Macy, John. "The New Age of American Poetry," in Current History, xxxv (1932), 553-558.

- Masters, Edgar Lee. "The Poetry Revival of 1914," in The American Mercury, xxvi (1932), 272-280.
- Miles, Hamish. "From an Inner Fever," in The Saturday Review of Literature, iv (1927), 85-86.
- Morris, Lawrence S. "Sherwood Anderson: Sick of Words," in The New Republic, li (1927), 277-279.
- Myers, Henry Alonzo. "Whitman's Conception of the Spiritual Democracy, 1855-1856," in American Literature, vi (1934), 239-253.
- Nash, J. V. "Carl Sandburg: an American Homer," in Open Court, xliiv (1930), 636-638.
- Powys, John Cowper. "Edgar Lee Masters," in The Bookman, lxiix (1929), 650-656.
- Rosenfeld, Paul. "Carl Sandburg," in The Bookman, llii (1921), 389-396.
- "Sherwood Anderson," in The Dial, lxxii (1922), 29-42.
- Smith, Rachel. "Sherwood Anderson: Some Entirely Arbitrary Reactions," in The Sewanee Review, xxxvii (1929), 159-163.
- Untermeyer, Louis. "A Novelist Turned Prophet," in The Dial, lxiiv (1918), 483-485.
- "Strong Timber," in The Dial, lxv (1918), 263-264.
- Walsh, Thomas. "Poets, Rose Fever and Other Seasonal Manifestations," in The Bookman, xlix (1929), 728-734.
- Yust, Walter. "Carl Sandburg, Human Being," in The Bookman, liii (1921), 285-290.

Date Due

FEB 20

May 27 '37 H

APR 17

MAY 19 1942

NOV 18 1948

X 1936-36 A.M. 287312

Haught

Influence of Walt Whitman

on Sherwood Anderson and C. L.

X 1936-36 A.M.

287312

Duke University Libraries



D02474481U